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A Feminist Companion to the Bible

A Feminist Companion to Tobit and Judith

Edited by Athalya Brenner-Idan
with Helen Efthimiadis-Keith

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THE FEMINIST COMPANION TO THE BIBLE
(Second Series)

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Series Editor
Athalya Brenner-Idan

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TOBIT AND JUDITH

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
AJSR	*Association for Jewish Studies Review*
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung.* Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. Berlin, 1972–
AOS	American Oriental Society
ATU	Aarne–Thompson–Uther folktale type index
BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentum
Bib	*Biblica*
BibSem	Biblical Seminar
BJS	*Brown Judaic Studies*
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CEJL	Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature
CRBS	*Currents in Research: Biblical Studies*
CTU	*The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani, and Other Places.* Edited by M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartín. Münster, 1995
DCLS	Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies
DCLY	Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook
DJD	Discoveries in the Judean Desert
EncJud	*Encyclopaedia Judaica.* 16 vols. Jerusalem, 1972
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FCB	Feminist Companion to the Bible
HBS	Herders biblische Studien
HThK.AT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
IDB	*The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible.* Edited by G.A. Buttrick. 4 vols. Nashville, 1962
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JFSR	*Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
JSHRZ	*Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit*

JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods*
JSJSup	*Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods: Supplements*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplements
JSP	*Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*
KJV	King James Version
KLIO	Klio. Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte. Beihefte
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSTS	Library of Second Temple Studies
MSU	Mitteilungen des Septuaginta-Unternehmens
NEB	New English Bible
NEB	Die neue Echter Bibel
NETS	*A New English Translation of the Septuagint and the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under that Time.* Edited by Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright. New York, 2007
NIV	New International Version
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OTP	*Old Testament Pseudepigrapha.* Edited by J. H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. New York, 1983
PGM	*Papyri graecae magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri.* Edited by K. Preisendanz. Berlin, 1928
RB	*Review biblique*
RHPR	*Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses*
RivB	*Rivista biblica italiana*
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SAT	Scriptores Aethiopici
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
TSK	*Theologische Studien und Kritiken*
UTB	Uni-Taschenbücher
WEB	World English Bible
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

INTRODUCTION

Athalya Brenner-Idan

In July 2013 Helen Efthimiadis-Keith and Pierre Jordaan organized an international conference titled 'Body, Psyche and Space in Old Testament Apocryphal Literature', which was held at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa. We were sitting, in between listening to papers on *Tobit*,[1] *Judith*, *Susanna* and Maccabees, among others, when Helen said: 'Isn't it time we edited another *Feminist Companion* on *Judith* and *Susanna*, this time also on *Tobit*?' This seemed like a good idea: the previous Feminist Companion volume on *Judith* and *Susanna* first appeared nearly twenty years ago.[2] Furthermore, there was no *Feminist Companion* in the series for *Tobit*.[3] So I liked the idea. There and then we wrote to Dominic Mattos, the Bloomsbury T&T Clark publisher whose responsibility such volumes are. He liked the idea as well, and shepherded us through its compilation and production. Thank you, Dominic, as ever, for your graceful help in publication projects!

From the very beginning of the planning stage, our aim was not only to present original articles, solicited and written especially for this volume; we also wanted to include previously published essays that have been influential in *Judith* and *Tobit* research in the last 20 years or so. Some such work was being cited in the newer essays again and again and served as profound inspiration for further study along the line suggested — or for building up heated opposition; this meant that the interpretations and analyses in that previous work were still meaningful for contemporary research. We noted that, and were also curious: Have the authors of the original pieces changed their minds about their own research in the years since the original publications? Had they been writing now, what would they have changed with the view from afar? Therefore, we approached several authors, who agreed to have their original essays reprinted, as is, and also to append to them a self-response, indicating how they view their

---

[1] *Tobit* (italicized) refers to the 'book of Tobit', while Tobit (regular font) refers to the character by the same name. This distinction also applies to other biblical books that bear a character's name, like *Esther*, *Judith* and *Susanna*.

[2] Athalya Brenner, ed., *A Feminist Companion to Esther, Judith and Susanna* (FCB, 7; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995). Several volumes of the first and second FCB series (19 volumes in all and including this volume) were reprinted several times, and the whole reprinted by T&T Clark in the mid-2000, but no new volume has been added since 2001.

[3] As it turned out, we eventually found out that we could not include articles on *Susanna* in the present collection.

own work after about two decades. The result, we believe, is a multi-level dialogue-in-writing: first, newer contributors use the reproduced previously published materials to further their own scholarship, while at the same time conversing with the older materials. Second, contributors of previously published pieces respond to their own past opinions and claims, or rewrite them. And third, last but not least, they respond to the new scholarly voices that have appeared since their original pieces were written and published. Thus, the old[er] and new[er] blend, if not merge.[4]

The business of this series — and this volume — is to foreground feminist criticism, be it of any hue, self-confessed or otherwise, and to expose non-feminist reading views and strategies for what they are and do. The issues raised will mainly form a cluster around the following questions: How can a feminist conviction contribute to the reading process? What are the gains of such an approach? And how can it initiate a two-way process? This opens up additional avenues of understanding the biblical text, and integrating the text into the reader's world by way of appropriation or rejection. It is impossible to touch upon all of the interpretive topics present in *Tobit* or *Judith*. Accordingly, a primary issue chosen for attention here is that of *identity* in all its forms and mutations: individual, genderized, and communal. This is one of the axes on which both books hinge, albeit in different ways. This is one of the subtexts that is shared by both texts on the deeper narrative level. This is also the main topic upon which most of the contributors reflect. Interpretations of contents, plot and surface structure are certainly essential; however, identity and its [self] definitions, in and by both in-text characters and text readers, are at the epicenter of both books.

Part 1
Tobit: On Religious Identity, Gender and Food

How does it feel, what does it mean, how is it imagined to be a practising and observant Jew, male or female, in an undisclosed — although pretending to be specific and historical — diaspora a couple of centuries before the Common Era?

Amy-Jill Levine's essay, 'Diaspora as Metaphor: Bodies and Boundaries in the Book of Tobit' (1992), has been greatly influential in *Tobit* studies, and is much cited by contributors to this volume. Therefore, she has expanded and revised it, and this revision opens this volume under the title 'Redrawing the Boundaries: A

[4] A technical remark: when contributors cite previous publications that are reproduced in the present volume, they do so by citing the original publication data (i.e. original page numbering). In such cases, the page numbers of the cited original are followed by the corresponding reprint page numbering in parentheses.

New Look at "Diaspora as Metaphor: Bodies and Boundaries in the Book of Tobit"'. The essay starts from the following notion: 'Emphasizing the acute threat to identity posed by the exilic collapse of boundaries and then diffusing that threat by reinscribing distinctions, *Tobit* brings stability to an unstable world' (p. 4). Diasporic identification depends on kinship, not land. Endogamy is crucial: this may be why Sarah's first husbands are killed, and this is why marriageable (in-tribe) women are crucial to identity formation or identity loss. But Sarah, and other women in this book, are objects, not subjects. They are subordinate and domesticated. They are used as exchange tokens and for economic gain, but the real identity created is an exilic male identity that gets its definition from the socially captive (by him) female, inasmuch as he (the Jewish male) is a captive in a strange land. The male is the image of the nation in exile, according to Levine; and in this her conclusion is similar to Egger-Wenzel's, although she reaches it from a different perspective.

Renate Egger-Wenzel, in 'Jewish Self-Awareness, Religious Identity and Acts of Resistance in the Book of Tobit', employs a close philological reading of the Greek texts of *Tobit* throughout her essay. She shows what techniques are used in order to create an admittedly defensive, diasporic, Jewish self-identity through the fantasy fiction of the book, with its many borrowings from the Hebrew Bible and analogies to postbiblical, early Jewish literature. Tobit practices *mitzvoth* (commandments)[5] privately and supports his self-definition by his own version of biblical history; but he also has a personal theology of resistance to the alien political power (the burying of fellow Jews): both ways contribute to his and his family's 'Jewishness', as does the emphasis on endogamy. Throughout her essay Egger-Wenzel goes along with the male-oriented character of the text, without trying to evaluate it in a dissimilar manner, until she foregrounds some feminist points at the end of her essay. For her, the Jewishness offered in this text is that practiced by males and transferred from male to male.

Beverly Bow and George W.E. Nickelsburg, in 'Patriarchy with a Twist: Men and Women in *Tobit*' (1991), state that the narrative world of *Tobit* is decidedly patriarchal, with men operating in the public sphere and as religious and social authorities, and women relegated to the domestic sphere, are socially subordinate and religiously inferior. However, from Anna's work and her relationship with Tobit, Edna's authority over her servants, and Sarah's prayer, Bow and Nickelsburg learn that the patriarchal worldview described is not free of gender tension, which is evidenced in the story. Whether the cracks in the social order described reflect any author's reality, they conclude, is difficult to determine.

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[5] Although, as Egger-Wenzel rightly states and further discusses (pp. 45-46), there is no mention of two central Jewish *mitzvoth*: male circumcision and keeping the Sabbath.

Bow and Nickelsburg were not available to comment on their essay. Therefore I (Athalya Brenner-Idan) tried to respond to them in 'Does the "Twist" Point to Heterarchy? A Response to Bow and Nickelsburg' (2014). My initial question is: If the world order described (fictively or otherwise) in *Tobit* is 'patriarchy with a twist', that is, cracks and fissures, perhaps it is not 'patriarchy'; and if not 'patriarchy', can such a world view, or order, fit into the definition of 'heterarchy', a more open social order that contains not only top-down hierarchies but also horizontal hierarchies of power and resource management? Rejecting 'patriarchy' as old-fashioned and factually misleading, while applying this social model to biblical (and other ancient and modern) societies, has been done recently by social-science and archaeology scholars, in biblical studies especially by Carol Meyers. Can this model fit better the gender relations and roles in *Tobit*?

Beate Ego, in 'The Banishment of the Demon in *Tobit*: Textual Variants as a Result of Enculturation' (2006), focuses on the relationship between Sarah and the demon Asmodeus, and the banishment of the demon, in the two main Greek textual variants of the story. How is Sarah released from the demon and/or his love for her, by divorce or by Raphael binding of him? The literary preference for that or the other version depends on the textual variant's provenance, be it the Eastern or the Western Diaspora, and on the authors' and copyists' acculturation to their time and place, as evidenced by their choice of detail in this segment of the story.

In her original article Ego chose a segment of the story that is crucial for Sarah's release. The choice may be termed a feminist choice, although in the essay itself she focuses strictly on textual criticism and its yields for reading *Tobit*. However, in her 'Self-Response to "Textual Variants"' (2014), Ego proposes the feminist move of focusing on Sarah and her fate and rather than on Asmodeus's fate. Sarah is presented as a 'Killer Wife', much like Tamar daughter-in-law of Judah (Gen. 38). This is a well-known ancient Near Eastern *topos*, frightening for men as a collective. Although Sarah may be seen as not active in changing her fate, she is active: she prays. Her prayer causes God to send Raphael to save her—and this changes her status as killer and may change the *topos* somewhat; thus, in a way, she participates in effecting her own personal salvation. Alternatively, as an altogether another feminist move, Ego suggests reading Raphael's banishment of Asmodeus as the [male] demon release from the 'Killer Wife'. And this, once more, is food for [feminist] thought.

Food is a solid identity marker, a cultural boundary for in- and out-groups. Indeed, there is a lot of eating in *Tobit*. The next two essays, 'Seen and Heard, but Hardly Eating: Female Consumption in the Book of Tobit' by Naomi S.S. Jacobs, and 'Food and Death: an Autobiographic Perspective on Tobit according

to One Woman's Binge-Eating Disorder' by Helen Efthimiadis-Keith, are about food as gender classification and personal identity definition.

Jacobs proceeds from the notion that female figures are prominent in *Tobit* (as well as in several HB and deuterocanonical writings), but male figures are dominant in the story. Does this state of affairs points to 'patriarchy with a twist'? In response to Bow and Nickelsburg and others, and by using the comparative parameter of female against male food consumption, Jacobs shows how the depiction of females in *Tobit* is acutely problematic. Food and eating is central to *Tobit*; and yet, no female figure is shown eating in the story. In Jacobs' own words, '...it seems that it is not enough for a female character to talk or even to talk back; if she does not eat, certain realms of the story are inherently closed to her, including the physical level, the level of the story's deep structure and, in some respect, the spiritual level (righteousness)' (p. 97).

Efthimiadis-Keith looks at food and eating in *Tobit* from another, and more personal, perspective. Food, a life element, is frequently coupled with death in the book, where the two occur in close proximity — a phenomenon which begs for examination. Efthimiadis-Keith reads this through a feminist, autobiographical lens of BED (Bing-Eating Disorder). After a brief discussion of BED features, causes and effects of BED as she has experienced them, and its feminist aspects, she reads Tobit (the character) from a BED perspective. The reading produces a redefinition of the character and, in turn (as happens with autobiographical criticism), produces implications for and effects on the scholarly as well as the non-scholarly life of the essay's author.

Part 2
What Can We Do with Judith?

Judith (Hebrew *Yehudit*) means 'Jew' or 'Judean' (both grammatically feminine). No wonder, then, that *Judith* — like *Tobit* — has Jewish identity and communal boundaries, in conditions of duress from the outside, as a central motif.[6] This is also the name of the book's central female figure, which strengthens the same motif but raises fresh questions about the group identity she perforce [re]presents — questions that refer to 'her' appearance late in the plot, 'her' character and actions, and 'her' religious behaviour. An examination of Judith as character is therefore indispensable for understanding the identity issues in *Judith*, and vice versa.

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[6] Whereas the fictive spatial background in *Tobit* is diasporic, in *Judith* it is the land of Israel. Nevertheless, they share the anxiety of danger from alien forces and its consequences for Jewish existence as such. The solutions offered by each plot for the problem are of course far removed from each other, although elements of fantasy abound in both.

Pamela J. Milne's 1993 essay, 'What Shall We Do with Judith? A Feminist Assessment of a Biblical "Heroine"', is widely quoted in *Judith* scholarship in general and also in this volume. Milne first reviews previous scholarship on Judith the character, mostly complimentary and glorifying in tone, then asks whether such a positive assessment of the character — and what she represents — is the best option for feminist readers. Having examined the book in terms of structural analysis (after Propp and Jason), her conclusion is, in her own words: 'I would suggest that feminist readers reject any suggestion that she is a feminist heroine or a feminist's heroine. As a character Judith is, instead, a seductive helper who effectively promotes gynophobia, not equity, in a patriarchal narrative. Though she plays an important literary role in an epic struggle to liberate her people from the Assyrians, Judith liberates neither herself nor her countrywomen from the status quo of the biblical gender ideology' (p. 136).

In her 'A Self-Response: What Would I Do with Judith Now?' (2014), Milne looks at her previous essay and some critiques of it over the years. She does not change her mind: to the contrary. Looking at recent events of Islamic State displayed (on electronic media and television) beheadings, most bible readers will define those as acts of terror and unnecessary cruelty. The questions Milne has asked about Judith's 'heroism' have now become even more topical and are amplified: Why do readers, especially feminist readers, tend to forgive Judith's act of murder and shaming display — and similar biblical acts — and even praise such acts as narrated? In the 'real' world outside the biblical text such readers' reaction to contemporaneous beheadings — carried out, from their performers' viewpoint, in a holy war context too — will be fear and moral disapproval!

Helen Efthimiadis Keith, in 'Judith, Feminist Ethics and Feminist Biblical/Hebrew Bible Interpretation' (revised from 2010), returns to the same topic. Assessing Judith-as-character and the significance of such a critical assessment for feminist ethics is important since, for her, Judith is 'an unconscious communication of the national Jewish psyche' (p. 143). She uses a Jungian approach to demonstrate that an either/or, approval or negation, assessment of Judith closes the text to interpretation instead of opening it, thus does not fit in with the nature and values of feminist ethics. At the end of her article Efthimiadis-Keith suggests future feminist strategies for reading *Judith* as well as other biblical texts: usage of autobiographic material (which she does in her *Tobit* essay in this volume, pp. 98-113); statement of personal, emotional identification; a serious attitude to pre-scholarly interpretations; emphasis on the readings' communal value; and, finally, an avoidance of forming too-hasty, one-sided judgments on texts and textual characters.

Barbara Schmitz, 'The Function of the Speeches and Prayers in the Book of Judith', and Ora Brison, 'Judith: More than a Pious Widow Turned *Femme Fatale*?', take Judith-as-character elsewhere, as if they have listened to Efthimiadis-Keith's recommendations — at the end of her essay — for a careful feminist reading that will rescue Judith from Milne's negative assessment.

Both Schmitz and Brison highlight Judith as a religious persona. Schmitz calls our attention to the discrepancy between what Judith *does* and what she *says*. For Schmitz, the book should be read on two levels: that of the plot and that of Judith's speeches and prayers. According to the book's storyline or fabula, Judith morphs from a chaste widow into a *femme fatale*, a community and military leader, then back into a chaste widow. According to her speech acts, she is a deeply religious individual who sees herself as having a god-given mission to save her people, with God's help. In narratological terms, then, Judith can be understood only if her speeches and prayers are read as representing the author's focalization of his chief female character.

Brison takes this approach one step further and asks: If Judith is a religious persona, what religious role does she have in a social (and literary) world that by and large excludes women (and woman figures) from performing [official] religious, or even cultic, functions? By comparison to the rare cases in the Hebrew Bible and the ancient Near East where woman figures do manage to become religiously significant, and a careful analysis of Judith's speech acts and deeds, Brison builds up a case for viewing Judith as chiefly an intermediary between the Divine and her human community, a self-appointed messenger to her people with, perhaps, traces of a cultic function inherent in her portrait as well. This positive emphasis on Judith's religious aspect, in both Schmitz and Brison's essays, have obvious repercussions for her standing, on the metaphorical level, as the symbolic figure representing Jewishness or 'Israel'.

In 'Judith the Slaveholder' (revised from 1996), Jennifer Glancy moves in a completely different direction. Judith has a sidekick: her nameless (so it seems, but see the essay) female slave. While Judith removes herself from the material world and mourns and fasts, that slave runs the rich household. She is entrusted with a position of responsibility. On the other hand, she is neither consulted about whether she wishes to accompany Judith on her dangerous mission in the enemy camp, nor about carrying Holofernes' head back in her rucksack. Judith endangers her slave inasmuch as she endangers herself, and without explaining the odds to her: in fact, the slave doesn't have a single line in this text. Finally, Judith releases the slave into freedom — but only just before she dies, many years later. This is the prism through which Glancy examines Judith-as-character, again leading us to the more negative pole of Judith and *Judith* assessment. Attention, feminist readers: there is slavery in this textual world, and

it is never abolished, not even by a female 'heroine' for her indispensable helper, not as long as the former can enjoy the silent services of the latter.

In Athalya Brenner-Idan, 'Clothing Seduces: Did You Think It Was Naked Flesh that Did It?', I look at Judith's change of clothing as a key to her literary character. After briefly reviewing the significance of clothing as a cultural marker, I move into reviewing clothing and especially change of clothing (a garment change often signifies a turning point in a character's career) in the HB, by females and by males. In the case of female seduction, the would-be seductress indeed changes her clothes — and the seduction, whether it materializes or not, is signified by the clothes; naked flesh is not seen in the text, and the temptation is conveyed through the description of clothes rather than of the beautiful female body they hide. Thus female modesty, even of temptress figures, is retained and their body not seriously exposed. I conclude with some remarks on the somewhat parallel case of covering the body of the HB God with copious clothing, while the actual divine body remains hidden from sight.

The next two essays, Jan Willem van Henten's 'Words and Deeds: Seduction and Power in *Judith* and in *Death Proof*', and Emma England's 'Violent Superwomen: Super Heroes or Super Villains? Judith, Wonder Woman and Lynndie England' (2010), read *Judith* with popular culture. Judith is, literally, a 'Man Killer' (which, as a *topos*, may be read as akin to the 'Killer Wife' *topos* interpreters may assign to Sarah in *Tobit*). Both Van Henten and England focus on typologies of the Man Killer female in *Judith* as against the contemporaneous intertexts.

Van Henten reads Quentin Tarantino's movie *Death Proof*, in which a serial 'Woman Killer' male is finally cruelly murdered by three females, with *Judith*. In both, the would-be female victims become the perpetrators, whereas the male perpetrator becomes a victim. In both, male violence is matched by female murderous aggression. In both, elements of sexual seduction are present but sex is not explicitly performed. In both, clothing and change of clothing indicates the female characters' change of status and aspect, from victim or would-be victim to an avenger. In both, the issue of 'just violence', if such a thing exists as a moral category, is bound up with gender role and behaviour.

Emma England looks at Judith through the double lenses of two female figures: one fictitious, Princess Diana (of Themyscira), and better known as Wonder Woman; and one real, the young American soldier Lynndie England, who tortured and humiliated prisoners at the Iraqi prison of Abu Ghraib in the 2000s. Wonder Woman, who like Judith has a female sidekick, kills a man who has threatened her. Does this make her into a 'Super Hero' or a 'Super Villain'?, asks England. And what are the repercussions for evaluating Judith? Are such violent fictive characters suitable for being viewed by feminists as Superwomen, a role model to be emulated? And what about Lynndie England, who humiliated

those male prisoners-of-war and in fact violated them: she was put to trial and was punished for her behaviour. Why is her assessment negative, whereas that of Wonder Woman and Judith is mostly positive?

In her 'Second Thoughts on Female Terrorists and More: A Self-Response to "Violent Women"' (2014), England takes her questions further, in terms of current, politically violent events. What makes a woman/woman figure's violent behaviour justified, and what does it take to brand similar behaviour an act of terrorism? She also raises the possibility of reading the Judith and Holofernes death encounter not as political violence but as sexualized violence: as an act of a consensual BDSM (Bondage, Dominance, Submission, Sadism and Masochism), similar to implicit elements in the Wonder Woman comics.

Thus, at the end of Part 2, we come back, full circle, to Pamela Milne's questions with which we started. As feminist readers, as ethical human beings in the complex political actuality of the twenty-first century: What shall we do with Judith-the-character? And what shall we do with Judith as symbol of her people? And what shall we do with the biblical book, *Judith*? And with the diasporic and identity issues that are shared by both *Tobit* and *Judith*?

Part 1

Tobit:
On Religious Identity, Gender and Food

Chapter 1

Redrawing the Boundaries: A New Look at 'Diaspora as Metaphor: Bodies and Boundaries in the Book of Tobit'

Amy-Jill Levine

Revisiting an essay after close to twenty-five years comes with both dreads and delights.[1] One dreads to find comments now seen as naïve; one delights in an unremembered turn of phrase or, better, an approving citation from a later publication. For the most part, revisiting of both the essay and *Tobit* itself has been remarkably relief-filled. The pages below reflect modest rewordings and engagement with an updated bibliography, but the basic ideas remain the same.

At the time of the essay's original composition, bibliography on *Tobit*, especially in article form, was sparse. The book had been mined with historical-critical and textual-comparative tools as well as folklorist-formalist studies;[2] more recent work, especially in journals, includes assessing the book through disability studies[3] and the comedic genre.[4] However, studies up to the original

[1] The original version of this essay, which is here revised and updated, was published in *Diaspora and Judaism: Essays in Honor of, and in Dialogue with, A. Thomas Kraabel* (ed. J. Andrew Overman and Robert S. McLennan; South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism, 41; originally Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992, now published by Rowman & Littlefield), 105-17. Permission to reprint granted by Rowman & Littlefield and gratefully acknowledged.

See also Amy-Jill Levine, 'Women in Tobit', *The Bible Today* 37.2 (March/April 1999), 80-85; 'Tobit: Teaching Jews How to Live in the Diaspora', *Bible Review* 8.4 (1992), 42-51, 64; 'Tobit', in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: Third Edition with the Apocryphal/ Deuterocanonical Books* (ed. Michael D. Coogan; New Revised Standard Version; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 11-31.

[2] William Soll, 'Tobit and Folklore Studies, with Emphasis on Propp's Morphology', in *Society of Biblical Literature 1988 Seminar Papers* (ed. David J. Lull; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 39-53; see also his 'Misfortune and Exile in Tobit: The Juncture of a Fairy Tale Source and Deuteronomic Theology', *CBQ* 51 (1989), 209-31.

[3] Patricia Bruce, 'Constructions of Disability (Ancient and Modern): The Impact of Religious Beliefs on the Experience of Disability', *Neotestamentica* 44.2 (2010), 253-81; Micah D. Kiel, 'Tobit's Theological Blindness', *CBQ* 73 (2011), 281-98.

[4] E.g., David McCracken, 'Narration and Comedy in the Book of Tobit', *JBL* 114 (1995), 401-18; J. Schwartz, 'Remarques littéraires sur la roman de Tobit', *RHPR* 67 (1987), 293-97; J.R.C. Cousland, 'Tobit: A Comedy in Error?', *CBQ* 65 (2003), 535-53.

publication neither attended much to feminist issues nor extracted the pivotal role played by boundary definition and transgression; the same situation more-or-less holds today, almost a quarter-century later. Both a feminist approach and attention to analytic categories of boundary transgression, often employed by anthropology and critical theory and now by queer theory, provide substantial insight into the Diaspora setting of the novella. Where families are scattered and where the law of the land is not the Law of Moses, the covenant community requires precise means of self-definition. As Mary Douglas puts it, 'It is only by exaggerating the difference between within and without, above and below, male and female, with and against, that a semblance of order is created'.[5] Emphasizing the acute threat to identity posed by the exilic collapse of boundaries and then diffusing that threat by reinscribing distinctions, *Tobit* brings stability to an unstable world.

William Soll correctly observes that the 'instances of "villainy" in Tobit can be seen as acute manifestations of the chronic condition of exile'.[6] In exile, dead bodies lie in the streets and those who inter them are punished; demons fall in love with women and kill their husbands; even righteousness is no guarantee of stability, as both Tobit and his nephew Ahikar (cf. 14.10) realize. To claim, as some have, that the events in the Diaspora are not unique to its setting — for example, that a man might become sight-impaired by warm sparrow droppings and then lose his eyesight to inept physicians in the land of Israel as well[7] — is to

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[5] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), 4.

[6] Soll, 'Tobit and Folklore Studies', 51. He also notes (50), that the explicit setting distinguishes *Tobit* from most fairy tales. The exile 'imparts to the community a lingering background of shame, an abnormal dislocation which renders the time "out of joint" so long as it endures'. Soll repeats the point in 'Misfortune and Exile', 22, where he details how the instances of 'misfortune' in the book 'can be seen as acute manifestations of the chronic condition of exile'.

[7] John Collins ('The Judaism of the Book of Tobit', in *The Book of Tobit: Text, Tradition, Theology* [ed. Géza G. Xeravits and József Zsengellér; Papers of the First International Conference on the Deuterocanonical Books, Pápa, Hungary, 20–21 May 2004, Supplements to the *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 98 [Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2005], 23-40 [25-27]) suggests that Tobit's problems are not based on Diaspora existence and thus are not related to anxiety about exile and identity. Collins correctly notes that Tobit had 'favor and good standing before Shalmaneser' (1.13), and, citing Prov. 24.21-22, that difficulties created by rulers are by no means restricted to a Diaspora context. But extrapolating the experiences of the titular character from the impressions given by the book is a questionable way of determining the book's ethos. Jill Hicks-Keeton, 'Already/Not Yet: Eschatological Tension in the Book of Tobit', *JBL* 132.1 (2013), 97-117 (100), notes that 'eschatological conservatism describes only the beliefs of Tobit the character. The book of Tobit is another matter.' David McCracken ('Narration and Comedy', 401) goes farther, 'Tobit is a comic narrator who, although pious, embodies the ludicrous through his limited perspective, a perspective

ignore the narrative's multiple and exaggerated transgressive moves made by people, by nature, and by the supernatural. In the Diaspora, no immediately clear solid ground for self-definition exists. Thus it is the task of the characters to create this solidity.[8]

To alleviate these problems, the text makes three moves. First, it emphasizes imaginary geographical and historical references; these indicate that the spatial and temporal coordinates of exilic life do not determine Israel's identity. Next, it creates a series of boundary-breaking events — eating, defecating, inseminating, interring — to institute, transgress, and then reinforce distinctions. Finally, it delineates Israel by means of genealogy rather than geography.[9] In order to distinguish the Israelite from the gentile, *Tobit* advances a program centered on endogamy. Women properly domiciled in an endogamous relationship become the means by which the threat of the Diaspora is eliminated. That territorial relations are displaced onto gender relations is reinforced by the manner in which hierarchical, value-laden gender differences structure the novella.

References to Nineveh frame the text[10] and so metonymically situate the story in the Diaspora. But the historical map generated by this geographical figure is both imaginary and unstable. The first chapter (1.2) claims that Naphtali and Zebulon were exiled from the Galilee under Shalmaneser, not Tiglath-pileser III (2 Kgs 15.29).[11] Tobit states that Shalmaneser, not Sennacherib, was Sargon's son; he claims that Assueres and Nebuchadnezzar, not Cyaxares and Nabopolassar,

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that the third-person narrator and the reader transcend'. The book's focus on Jerusalem — a focus Collins sees as possibly redactional — together with its concern for preserving and strengthening identity, overwhelmingly demonstrate the problem of Diaspora. The claim for redaction here is unlikely: it has no manuscript evidence, the latter chapters are included among the Qumran fragments, and the chapters rhetorically match the remainder of the narrative.

[8] Gabriele Faßbeck states, 'It has rightly been argued that Israel's exile and restoration in a sense is the book's genuine topic' ('Tobit's Religious Universe between Kinship Loyalty and the Law of Moses', *JSJ* 36.2[(2005], 173-96 [187]), although she notes that the 'fundamental crisis...occurred *before* the exile: Israel did not worship its God in the proper locale' (192).

[9] Levine, 'Tobit: Teaching Jews How to Live in the Diaspora', 48. See also, *inter alia*, Ryan Schellenberg, 'Suspense, Simultaneity, and Divine Providence in the Book of Tobit', *JBL* 130 (2011), 313-27 (314), who correctly states, 'Tobit's carefully supervised narrative world is...a fitting response to the anxiety and seeming chaos of life in Diaspora — chaos that is itself represented but rendered impotent in the narrative'. Robert J. Littman, *Tobit: The Book of Tobit in Codex Sinaiticus* (Septuagint Commentary Series; Leiden: Brill, 2008), xxxv, states, 'Genealogy defines Judaism in the diaspora' (xxxvii-xli detail kinship structures).

[10] See Irene Nowell, 'The Narrator in the Book of Tobit', in Lull, ed., *SBL Seminar Papers*, 33.

[11] Irene Nowell, 'The Book of Tobit: Narrative Technique and Theology' (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America; Washington, DC, 1983), 45, suggests that the author might have drawn the reference to Shalmaneser from 2 Kgs 17.1-6 and 18.9-13.

took Nineveh.[12] Rages is described as only a two-day journey from Ecbatana (5.6).[13] Further, Raphael situates Rages at the mountains and Ecbatana out on the plateau (5.6, 10), but Ecbatana is in fact 2,500 feet higher than Rages.[14] The disjunction between the real and the recounted indicates the problem of Diaspora existence: things are not as they should be. Grounding in the external world is lacking: the main characters are 'on the road' where they face a 'precarious existence and do not enjoy any measure of stability'.[15]

Arguments that the book was composed in Yehud/Judea and therefore that the author has made honest mistakes about the geography of the Eastern Diaspora neither convince nor compromise this view of existence out of joint. The fictional, and confused, setting also plays a role in the opening of *Judith*, where the first line locates the story in 'the twelfth year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled over the Assyrians in the great city of Nineveh'. Nebuchadnezzar ruled over Babylon. The reference to Nineveh — whether an evocation of *Tobit*, an evocation of the equally fictional book of Jonah,[16] or a generic indicator of 'enemy territory of the past' — indicates a focus of things 'not as they should be' even as it portends the eventual destruction of the city, just as the original Nineveh was conquered.

Were *Tobit* to be a product from the Land of Israel, as the Qumran fragments and, perhaps, certain halakhic views suggest, the book then serves even more as a prompt: come home, where you belong.[17] Jerusalem, highlighted in the hymn of 13.9-18, is the 'motivation for continuance in the faith of the fathers, and a focal

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[12] Details and discussion in A. Wikgren, 'Tobit', *IDB*, 4:660; J.C. Dancy, *The Shorter Books of the Apocrypha* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972); Frank Zimmerman, *The Book of Tobit* (Dropsie College Series; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), 15-16.

[13] Nowell, 'Book of Tobit', 151 n. 69. Dancy, *Shorter Books*, 15, marks the confusing and unknown geographical references in both Sinaiticus and Vaticanus.

[14] Nowell, 'Book of Tobit', 151 n. 69. Dancy, *Shorter Books*, 10, suggests that Tobit's 'ignorance of the geography of Babylonia and Media' indicates a non-Diasporic origin. Geoffrey D. Miller, 'Raphael the Liar: Angelic Deceit and Testing in the Book of Tobit', *CBQ* 72 (2012), 492-508 (505 n. 46), supports the thesis that the geographic errors about Rages and Ecbatana are intentional, 'since it is Raphael who utters them', and Raphael dissembles throughout the text.

[15] F.M. Macatangay, 'Exile as Metaphor in the Book of Tobit', *RivB* 62 (2014), 177-92 (181).

[16] Connections to *Jonah* continue in *Tobit*, including in particular the role of a giant fish. See Levine, 'Tobit: Teaching Jews How to Live in the Diaspora', 46.

[17] See Hicks-Keeton, 'Already/Not Yet', 97-117. On the possibility of a Judean composition, see also Devorah Dimant, 'The Book of Tobit and Qumran Halakhah', in *The Dynamics of Language and Exegesis at Qumran* (ed. D. Dimant and R.G. Kratz; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 121-43.

point of hope, steadfastness and comfort amidst the vagaries of exile'.[18] It is everything the Diaspora is not.

Jerusalem represents the real and the ideal. But the community is in exile, so Jerusalem is of little immediate help. Indeed, the only references to cultic matters appear in the prologue and the epilogue, in the context of references to the unstable gentile nations (1.4; 13.10-18; 14.5 on the Temple; 1.6-8 on tithing). Rather than provide permanence to Assyria or Media, Jerusalem's mention so contextualized demonstrates the hope for return as well as the need for stability of those in exile.

The unreality of Diaspora existence also complicates both travel and the home. As in apocalyptic, only supernatural intervention brings meaning to movement and security to stasis. Before the deportation, travel was a religious act: Tobit emphasizes that he alone (Tob. 1.6a; κἀγὼ μόνος, but cf. 5.14) fulfilled pilgrimage regulations (Deut. 12.11-14; 16.16-17; 2 Chron. 11.16). But because of the community's sin, even the possibility of occasional travel, let alone pilgrimage, becomes problematic. Exile at first means perpetual movement: Tobit makes the frequent trek between Rages in Media and his home in Nineveh (Tob. 1.14); he flees to escape Sennacherib (1.19); he returns upon the accession of Ahikar (1.22), and prior to his blindness he moves frequently between the streets and his home. This mobility is even part of Tobit's legacy: Tobias also traverses street and home as well as moves between Nineveh and Ecbatana in Media. In his testamentary speech, Tobit commands his son not to remain in Nineveh (14.8), and Tobias complies by moving to Ecbatana (14.12). However, even this mobile marker of existence is undermined by effects of the Diaspora setting: Tobit is immobilized when he is blinded; Tobias does 'not even know which roads to take for the journey into Media' (5.2) and, since he cannot leave Ecbatana, he sends Raphael to Rages for his father's money (8.19–10.17). Only the angel can navigate foreign territories and survive unsafe roads (cf. 1.15). With his aid, Tobias is able to replace the pilgrimage his father made to Jerusalem with a pilgrimage to find a bride.[19] Thus a genealogical focus replaces a geographical one.

Coming full circle, the book does offer one more image of pilgrimage, but this one is of gentiles coming to worship the God of Israel.[20] Tobit 13.11, likely alluding to Zech. 8.21-22, anticipates an eschatological gathering of the nations

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[18] Ruth Henderson, *Second Temple Songs of Zion: A Literary and Generic Analysis of the* Apostrophe to Zion *(11QPSa XXII 1-15), Tobit 13:9-18 and 1 Baruch 4:30–5:9* (Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies, 17; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 175.

[19] I thank Jay Geller for this observation.

[20] See Beate Ego, 'The Book of Tobit and the Diaspora', in Xeravits and Zsengellér, eds., *Book of Tobit*, 41-54 (53); Hicks-Keeton, 'Already/Not Yet', 99, notes the parallels to Isa. 2.2-3 and 60.2-3.

in Zion: 'bright light will shine to all the ends of the earth; many nations will come to you from far away, the inhabitants of the remotest parts of the earth to your holy name, bearing gifts in their hands for the King of heaven. Generation after generation will give joyful praise in you...' Only in Jerusalem will Jews and gentiles live harmoniously. The book offers no indication of gentiles joining Jews in the Diaspora for Jewish worship or practice.

The lack of stable place and so of both secure movement and a secure home is directly connected to kinship ties. On the structural level, kinship remains literally outside the Diasporan frame: the opening line of the book, 'This is the story of Tobit, son of Tobiel, son of Hananiel...of the family of Asiel, of the tribe of Naphtali', precedes the mention of the exile (1.2). The family remains untouched although threatened by the deportation. Similarly, when Tobit is punished for transgressing Sennacherib's law, he observes, 'Nothing was left to me but Anna my wife and my son Tobias's (καὶ οὐ κατελείφθη μοι οὐδὲν πλὴν Ἄννας τῆς γυναικός μου καὶ Τωβίου τοῦ υἱοῦ μου [1.20]). Such stable kinship is, again, immediately contrasted with the instability of the Diaspora. While families unite and define the Israelite community, the Assyrian king is murdered by two of his sons (1.21).

Concern for kinship also pervades Tobit's tribal identification. Written during the Hellenistic period but backdated to the eighth century BCE, the apocryphon concerns the preservation of one Naphtalite family. The choice of tribes is not accidental. Naphtali was geographically separated from the other Rachel tribes even in the homeland by the apportionment of land to Issachar and Zebulun (Josh. 19.32-39); it was also closely connected with the local population, as Judg. 1.33 makes clear: 'Naphtali dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land'. While the tribe showed community solidarity in battle (Judg. 5.18; 6.35; 7.23), it was not secure even within Israel's borders. Because of the Assyrian exile, Naphtali, like the rest of the Northern tribes, permanently lost both its connection to the land and its self-identity.[21] The shift from a geographical to a genealogical definition is therefore appropriate as well as poignant.

Since identity is maintained through kinship ties and not the land, Tobit emphasizes endogamy. He and Anna are from the same family (Tob. 1.9), and he strongly urges his son to follow suit (4.12-13).[22] In turn, Sarah (incorrectly)

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[21] *Tobit* is thus consistent with if not the origin of other notices that the so-called 'ten lost tribes' were thriving in Media and its environs. For brief discussion, see Yehoshua M. Grintz, 'Tobit', in *EncJud*, 15:1186.

[22] On kinship ties, see Nowell, 'Book of Tobit', 121 n. 42 and, on kinship terms, Paul Desalaers, *Das Buch Tobit* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis, 43; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 309-15. The concern for endogamy is noted in particular by Dancey, *Shorter Books*, 8, who claims that the motif 'is not present in the original folk-tale, and is not even necessary to the story of Tobit'.

notes that she has no relatives left to marry (3.15). Raphael observes that Tobias, as Sarah's only eligible relation, is her destined spouse (6.11; cf. 7.10, 12). Because these familial contacts transcend geographic borders — Tobit's family follows him to Media; Tobias must travel to Rages to find his bride and must return with her to Media; even Tobias's inheritance is *movable* property (cf. 10.10)[23] — the family is both the most threatened and the most stable institution in the narrative world. Despite the disruptions of exile, Tobit can count on finding family members throughout the Assyrian empire. Cousland wryly observes, 'Virtually every character in the work, including the famous sage Ahiqar, is related to Tobit or belongs to the tribe of Naphtali'.[24]

George Nickelsburg suggests that the concern for endogamy is less a matter of ethnic purity than it is an argument against any 'arrogant disdaining of one's own people', which could then lead to the loss of self-identity.[25] However, when in-group and out-group are problematic categories, stress on ethnic identification can be anticipated. Given that Alexander the Great promoted a program of exogamy, and that 'it would have been regarded as socially, politically, and economically advantageous by many Jews to seek a union with a well-placed Gentile family',[26] the emphasis *Tobit* places on endogamy reveals the need for such boundary markers. The problem of intermarriage is not merely hypothetical.

This concern for endogamy may also speak to text-critical issues. Tobias Nicklas notes that 'in 7.11, G^{II} [Sinaiticus] tells that Raguel has given Sarah to seven men "of our brothers/kinsmen" — while G^{I} [Vaticanus and Alexandrinus] just speaks of seven men'.[27] The latter reading suggests, although based on an argument from silence, that the first seven husbands were fated to die: they could not maintain the familial line of Sarah, an only child.

On the transcendent level, the transgression of human/supernatural borders by Asmodeus leads to lack of conception and to death. Beate Ego presses this point by suggesting that the demon represents an 'anti-Israelite' factor that brings death in exile.[28] The demon's love for Sarah (6.15) cannot be requited,

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[23] Nowell, 'Book of Tobit', 272. See also the discussion below.

[24] Cousland, 'Comedy in Error', 538. This notice counters McCracken's argument from silence ('Narration and Comedy in Tobit', 414) that Raphael's *lack* of stress on endogamy is a critique of Tobit's 'narrow, tribalistic view'.

[25] 'Tobit', in *Harper's Bible Commentary* (ed. James L. Mays; New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 796.

[26] David A. deSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha: Message, Context, and Significance* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 76.

[27] Tobias Nicklas, 'Marriage in the Book of Tobit', in Xeravits and Zsengellér, eds., *Book of Tobit*, 139-54 (151).

[28] Beate Ego, '"Denn er liebt sie" (Tob 6,15 Ms 319): Zur Rolle des Dämons Asmodäus in der Tobit-Erzählung', in *Die Däomenon-Demons. Die Dämonoogie der israelitisch-jüdischen*

and it cannot lead to reproduction. It follows that, on the domestic level, exogamy would lead to sterility and death for Tobit's family.

The concern for genealogical distinction even has a teleological focus, as at least three factors demonstrate. First, in the universalistic prophecies of the final chapter, ethnic categories are maintained. 'All the gentiles will turn to fear the Lord God in truth, and will bury their idols; all the gentiles will praise the Lord' (14.6-7). The point is that they will do so *as gentiles*. Second, endogamous marriage, headed by the loyal Jewish husband, ensures that there will be Jews in that future setting. 'Tobit assumes that family tradition does not necessarily guarantee correct religious conduct but that the law-conversant individual who presides over a family group has to ensure that everybody in this group behaves in accordance with that law'.[29]

Third, endogamy is also a necessary element in Israel's eschatology. As Tobit advises: 'Above all, marry a woman of the lineage of your forefathers. Do not marry a stranger who is not of your father's tribe, because we are sons of the prophets. My boy, keep in mind Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob...all of them took wives from among their own kinsmen and were blessed in their children. Remember that their posterity shall inherit the land' (Tob. 4.12; cf. 14.10). The telos of endogamy is thus the ingathering of the exiles. By identity-determining kinship ties the land is re-obtained; the land is now the result, rather than the origin, of community self-definition.[30] And women are both the means of salvation and the threat to it; exogamy and entry of women into the public sphere destroys the community; endogamy and an attendant restriction of women to the home saves it.

The sharp conditions of exile both make appropriate marriage partners difficult to find and displace the stability of the Israelite household. The obstacles that exile places before identity formation are played out in the plights of the central characters of the narrative. Although they all suffer, the significance of their tragedies is gender-coded. While Tobit's suffering makes his character paradigmatic of the displaced community[31] (more precisely, Tobit represents the

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und frühchristlichen Literatur im Kontext ihrer Umwelt (ed. A. Lange, H. Lichtenberger, and K.F. Diethard Römheld; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 309-17 (315), summarized in Thomas Hieke, 'Endogamy', in Xeravits and Zsengellér, eds., *Book of Tobit*, 103-20 (111 and n. 26). See also Ego, 'Book of Tobit', 51.

[29] Faßbeck, 'Tobit's Religious Universe', 186.

[30] This focus on return may be one reason why the Vulgate omits the concern for endogamy. Hieke, 'Endogamy', 109, notes the shift in the Vulgate but does not discuss it.

[31] *Inter alia*: George Nickelsburg suggests that Tobit is 'paradigmatic for the exiled nation' ('Tobit', 791); cf. 'Tobit and Enoch', 60, and Faßbeck, 'Tobit's Religious Universe', 188. Nowell, 'Book of Tobit', 116: 'He accepts responsibility for corporate guilt (Tob 3.3-5). He sees his own suffering and deliverance as model for that of the nation (Tob 11.15; 13.2, 5, 9)... He is at one

nation in temporary exile; he forms the bridge between the Diaspora and the return home), the sufferings of women — of Sarah and Edna and Anna — do not. Women instead face the loss of identity produced by dislocation.

Because the attack on Sarah's ability to consummate her marriage and so produce children parallels the attack on Tobit's sight, the two scenes can be compared to show that more is going on than simply that the deity 'works even in cruel and evidently arbitrary circumstances'.[32] The circumstances may be cruel, but they are by no means arbitrary. They indicate an exaggerated concern for boundaries between not only men and women, but also life and death, clean and unclean, human and nonhuman. The Diaspora problematizes these distinctions by muddying the boundaries; Soll even proposes that 'the author of Tobit thought that exile made Jewish maidens more vulnerable to evils' such as interference by local demons.[33] The role of male characters and their supernatural helpers is, then, to reinstate those boundaries.

Sarah, the woman, is threatened by the mixing of the human and the supernatural. The demon Asmodeus has killed her seven grooms and thereby prevented her from producing an heir. She consequently cannot fulfill her duty to either her father or her family line; Vaticanus suggests that daughters may not inherit (3.15; cf. 8.21; 14.13).[34] Since her situation is recounted five times,[35] Sarah literally cannot escape associations of childlessness. Ironically, because of the demon's sexual interest, her body remains untouched and therefore incapable of fulfilling its role.

By desiring Sarah, Asmodeus creates category confusion whose disastrous implications are well known to those familiar with the Fall of the Watchers. Raphael apparently had such familiarity. He never speaks with women, and he

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and the same time an individual and a symbol of the Jewish people'; and 123. Dancy, *Shorter Books*, 5, suggests that Tobit and Tobias, as split-heroes, share this paradigmatic role. Hicks-Keeton, 'Already/Not Yet', 101, finds an 'intimate connection — almost a fluidity — between Tobit the individual and Israel as a nation'.

[32] So Nickelsburg, 'Tobit', 794, citing Ben Sira 38.1-7.

[33] Soll, 'Tobit and Folklore Studies', 51.

[34] R. H. Pfeiffer, *History of New Testament Times with an Introduction to the Apocrypha* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1946), 266: 'The prescription that daughters who must inherit their father's estate because they have no brothers must marry within their tribe (Num 7:1-11, 36 [*sic*: Num 27 and 36]) seems to be understood in 6.12 (Gk 6.13), in the sense that a father who fails to give his daughter (who will inherit from him) to her next of kin is guilty of a capital offense'. See also B. Bow and G.W.E. Nickelsburg, 'Patriarchy with a Twist: Men and Women in Tobit', in *'Women Like This': New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. Amy-Jill Levine; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 141 (60 in this volume).

[35] In 3.8 by the narrator; 3.8-9 by the maids; 3.15 in Sarah's prayer; 6.14-15 in Tobias's comments; and 7.11 in Raguel's note. This list, with commentary, appears in Nowell, 'Book of Tobit', 100-101.

avoids their company. Returning to Nineveh, he urges Tobias: 'You know how we left your father [not mother]. Let us hurry on ahead of your wife' (11.2-3). Similarly, to convey his parting instructions, Raphael 'called the two men aside privately' (κρυπτῶς, 12.6). Tobit receives from the angel the explanation that the deity had been testing him (12.13); Sarah receives so such commentary.

Sarah's position is further marginalized by her ignorance and her silence. Although her parents know of Tobit (7.2), and Tobias knows of her (6.14), she is so far removed from contact with others that she is unaware of her spouse-to-be (3.15).[36] Nor does she appear to be aware of Asmodeus. This lack of connection translates into lack of communication. She does not respond to her slaves' taunts (3.8-9), is mute at her wedding ceremony (7.12-13), fails to address her mother's words of comfort (7.17), and does not react to Tobit's effusive welcome (11.17).[37] Her first word is 'no',[38] and 'Amen' is the only word she speaks in another's presence (8.8).[39]

Like other women in the text as well, Sarah is object rather than subject. She is her father's property, 'and her chief function is marriage to the appropriate kinsman' (cf. 3.8-15; 7.11-13; 10.10).[40] Tobias actually inherits her (6.12; cf. 7.10). Similarly, her value and her fate are determined by her reproductive capacities: thus, Tobit advises his son to take care of his mother because 'of all the dangers she faced for your sake while you were in her womb' (4.4). Woman is, in effect, in a perpetual Diaspora; her location is never her own, but it is contingent on that of her father, husband, or sons. Labels applied to women confirm this subordinated, objectified role. For example, Tobit refers to Sarah as his daughter (cf. 11.17) and so keeps her in a dependent position; kinship language, prominent in the book (the terms 'brother' and 'sister' occur sixty-six times[41]), keeps Sarah in the position of 'relative' and so detracts from her role as spouse or even woman. In turn, Edna elevates Tobias by addressing him as 'dear brother' (10.12).[42]

Complementing Sarah's exaggerated marginalization is Anna's exaggerated entry into the public sphere. According to this text as well as the *Testament of Job*, *Judith*, and *Ben Sira*, where women leave the safety of the home and make

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[36] Nowell, 'Book of Tobit', 46, in a list of several inconsistencies.

[37] Nowell, 'Book of Tobit', 191.

[38] Nowell, 'Book of Tobit', 182.

[39] See the more extended discussion in Bow and Nickelsburg, 'Patriarchy'.

[40] Nowell, 'Book of Tobit', 145; cf. Bow and Nickelsburg, 'Patriarchy', 135 (56 in this volume): 'Like a piece of property, Sarah is given to Tobias (7.13), just as Raguel gave her to her seven previous husbands (7.11)'.

[41] Littman, *Tobit*, xxxiv.

[42] See Bow and Nickelsburg, 'Patriarchy', 142 (62 in this volume).

contacts with people outside the family, category confusion and marital disharmony result.[43] The *Testament* follows the canonical *Job* in making the wife a figure doomed to fail; Judith is a widow who seduces and then kills the man who seeks to seduce her; Ben Sira warns, 'There is wrath and impudence and great disgrace when a wife supports her husband' (25.22). The problem for Tobit is not that Anna is working; Will Soll correctly notes, 'There is no sense that by receiving wages for weaving Anna is operating outside cultural and Jewish norms, and Tobit's own use of the gendered phrase "women's work" implies that he accepts the suitability of such work for his wife'.[44] The problem is that she is both supporting him and that she is contracting with outsiders, and so his honor is compromised. Anna is not with Tobit when she is at work; she has to 'come' to him (cf. 2.13: ὅτε δὲ ἦλθε πρός με).

Anna's engagement in 'women's work'[45] gives rise to the first of her three extended conversations with Tobit (2.11-14; 5.17-19; 10.1-7), and none is a model of domestic harmony. In 2.11-15, Tobit accuses Anna of stealing the goat her employers had given her: 'Give it back to its owners; we have no right to eat anything stolen'. Although Anna is innocent, the accusation connects women with the transgression of both social and, possibly, dietary codes. Such connection is reinforced when Sarah's slavewomen accuse her of killing her husbands. Like the original (H)anna accused by Eli of being drunk (1 Sam. 1.13-15) and her deuterocanonical sister Susannah, Anna as well as Sarah have difficulty preserving their reputation; they are all challenged by people either in their community or in their own households.

This breakdown of domestic peace contrasts with Tobit's prayer for his future daughter-in-law. To his hope that, like Eve to Adam, Sarah will be a helper to Tobias, Tobit has added 'and support' (Tob. 8.5-7). The Edenic couple — given the problems of Genesis 3 — would not be the expected choice. As Schellenberg astutely notes, the reference to Adam and Eve suggests that 'something more fundamental than endogamy is at stake here — or, better, that endogamy is but one expression of this story's broader concern for reasserting order. Like God's

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[43] Such may be a recurring theme in one set of Jewish-Hellenistic documents: because of her husband's illness, Job's wife in *T. Job* finds herself in the same position as Anna. See Nowell, 'Book of Tobit', 114 n. 20; Deselaers, *Tobit*, 378. For Judith, see Amy-Jill Levine, 'Character Construction and Community Formation in Judith', in *Society of Biblical Literature 1989 Seminar Papers* (ed. David J. Lull; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 561-69.

For Ben Sira, see Claudia V. Camp, 'Understanding a Patriarchy: Women in Second Century Jerusalem through the Eyes of Ben Sira', in Levine, ed., *'Women'*, 1-40, esp. 26-33.

[44] Will Soll, 'The Book of Tobit as a Window on the Hellenistic Jewish Family', in *Passion, Vitality, and Foment: The Dynamics of Second Temple Judaism* (ed. Lamontte M. Luker; Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2001), 242-74 (268).

[45] On the connection with *T. Job*, see Nickelsburg, 'Tobit and Enoch', 54.

provision of a partner for Adam, God's providential uniting of Sarah and Tobias is an assertion of the fundamental orderedness of creation'[46] and so a response to Diaspora.

Bow and Nickelsburg propose the addition of 'helper' represents the father's concern that, should Tobias become unable to work, Sarah would support the family.[47] Given the marital problems Anna encounters after her venture into the public sphere, this hypothesis requires an addendum: Tobit wants both to profit from his wife's work and to demean her for doing it. Thus he does not allow her an identity through her labor. Her entry into the public sphere is, as noted above, a threat to his honor, and so to hers.

The woman's role — demonstrated by Edna — is to be in the house. There she performs her duties of caring for her husband and comforting her children. The point holds even for Anna: as Geoffrey D. Miller observes, Anna is the one who demonstrates 'responsible parenthood' in correcting Tobit's priorities: 'Don't let money come first! Rather let it be a ransom for our son! What the Lord has given us to live on is certainly enough for us' (Tob. 5.19-20).[48] Women's public or religious duties emerge only in men's absence. When Tobit is blinded, Anna enters the work force; when Tobit is orphaned, his grandmother Deborah assumes responsibility for his religious training (1.8). Otherwise, 'the overall tenor of the work shows men assuming the dominant and authoritative religious role in a marriage'.[49]

Connections between *Tobit* and Genesis reinforce this domestication. There are numerous parallels between Sarah of Genesis and Sarah of *Tobit*, including their beauty, inability to conceive, sexual attention from inappropriate partners, difficult relations with female slaves, and proposed solutions to their fertility problems. Yet Abraham's Sarah is a more well-rounded, proactive character than her namesake. Tobias's Sarah is important for what is done to her, rather than what she proactively does. As David deSilva puts it, 'Sarah's virtue is measured by her chastity'.[50] Similarly, while Anna is comparable to Rebecca in that each cares for a blind husband, and while each fears the loss of her beloved son, Rebecca receives a divine omen and facilitates Jacob's ascension over his brother. Irene Nowell concludes that the women in Tobit are modeled on the matriarchs: 'beautiful, resourceful, devoted to their children, and feisty'.[51] The differences

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[46] Schellenberg, 'Divine Providence', 326.

[47] Bow and Nickelsburg, 'Patriarchy', 138 (59 in this volume).

[48] Miller, 'Angelic Deceit', 507.

[49] Cousland, 'Comedy in Error', 544.

[50] DeSilva, *Introduction to the Apocrypha*, 81.

[51] Irene Nowell, 'The Book of Tobit: An Ancestral Story', in *Intertextual Studies in Ben Sira and Tobit* (ed. Jeremy Corley and Vincent Skemp; Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series, 38; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2005), 3-13 (7).

also reveal: for Genesis the women are active; for the Apocryphon, the heroine is less so. Sarah's main role is to provide Tobias an endogamous marriage and an heir; Anna serves as the indication of just how bad matters in the Diaspora have become.

The content of the angel's instructions confirms this division of labor. Raphael states (Tob. 12.6-7, 17-18) that the proper response to divine beneficence is public praise (cf. 13.11; 14.6-7). If so, then women, only unnaturally placed in the public arena, are removed from the instruction as well as its fulfillment.

This removal of women from divine contact is supported even by the symbolic value of their names. Nowell observes that all four male characters — Tobit, Tobias, Raguel, and Raphael/Azariah — have theophanic names.[52] The women — Sarah, Anna, and Edna — do not. Rather, these three names are all connected with procreation. Sarah shares her name with Abraham's infertile wife. Edna's name occurs only once in the Masoretic text: in Sarah's comment in Gen. 18.12: 'Am I still to have pleasure (עדנה)?'

Ironically, whereas the matriarch can speak to sexual pleasure, Tobias's Sarah does not. Although *Tobit* is, generically, a romance, the major place where it breaks the convention is in the realm of romance itself. Sarah and Tobias do not share a night of detailed passion. After exorcising the demon, Tobias tells his bride, 'Sister, get up and let us pray and implore our Lord that he grant us mercy and safety' (Tob. 8.4). She obliges. Tobias prays, 'and then they both said, "Amen Amen"; then they went to sleep for the night' (8.8-9). Like Greek Esther, who abhors her Persian marriage bed, and Judith, who despite her sexual banter remains untouched in the enemy camp, Sarah is an object of desire *by the outsider*, not by the faithful Jewish man. Even Susannah faces the impossible choice of conviction on the false charge of adultery or rape by the elders of her community in Babylon. Outside the homeland, Jewish women become objects of lust; they are not safe. The Vulgate addition, perhaps added by Jerome himself, indicating that the couple abstained for three nights before consummating their marriage, continues this de-emphasis on spousal desire.

In Hellenistic romance, the desire is for the lover; for *Tobit*, the desire is for a child to continue the family name. Anna's name evokes the biblical Hannah, whose existence is defined by her relationship to her son as well as, notably, to the priority she places on conceiving him.[53] Sarah seeks an appropriate marriage; without one, she has no reason to live: 'for whom I should keep myself as wife?' (3.15).

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[52] Nowell, *Book of Tobit*, 108-109 and n. 5. Tobit and Tobias derive from the Hebrew for 'the Lord is my good'; Raguel is from 'friend of God' (the name is shared with Moses' father-in-law [Exod. 2.18; Num. 10.29]) and is the name of an archangel in *1 En.* 20.4, cf. 23.4); Raphael is 'God heals'; and Azariah is 'God has helped'.

[53] See the extended comparison in Nowell, *Book of Tobit*, 109-10.

Without the anchors of husband and home, women become either shrewish or despondent. Sarah's relationship with her female slaves shows that her unmarried and childless status both injure her and prompt her to injure others. Like her matriarchal namesake, this Sarah is reproached by social inferiors: her slaves[54] accuse her of murder.[55] Moreover, just as the menopausal wife Sarah tormented Hagar, so the Israelite virgin Sarah abuses her slaves. The slaves say to her, 'Why do you beat us? If they [your husbands] are dead, go with them! May we never see a son or daughter of yours!' (3.8). Like Anna, Sarah's slaves suffer rebuke because one higher on the social scale suffers. Like Tobit, upon a woman's rebuke Sarah is led to pray for her own death.

Sarah's prayer both confirms her objectified state and grants her a distinct subjectivity. In 3.13-15, she gives the choice of her fate to heaven. As Nowell observes, 'She is a woman and so used to having her life decided by others'.[56] Although Israel too is in a position determined by others, a qualitative distinction remains between the woman and the people. Israel determined its own fate; Tobit insists (somewhat hyperbolically): 'All the tribes that joined in apostasy used to sacrifice to the calf Baal, and so did the house of Naphtali my forefather' (1.5). Sarah has done nothing. As a woman, as unaware, as unable to interact, as impeded from conceiving, Sarah cannot represent the covenant community. Instead, unless she is redeemed by the community's pure, male representatives and their angelic aides, Sarah represents what could be its fate in the Diaspora: ignorant, childless, and in the undesired embrace of idolatry represented by the demon. Because she, like the other women in the novella, is defined by marital relationships, her identity only assumes meaning when she becomes a wife. On the symbolic level, she reveals that exiled Israel is only redeemed through the restoration of the genealogical continuity lost along with her first seven husbands.

And yet, Sarah does offer a prayer. Like her deuterocanonical sisters Judith, Susannah, (LXX) Esther, and the Maccabean mother of seven martyred sons, she freely addresses God. Her contemplation of suicide (3.10: λυπήθη σφόδρα ὥστε

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[54] The earlier version of this essay read 'servant'; the Greek (Tob. 3.7) is παιδισκη. Jennifer A. Glancy calls attention to how this text regards the beating of slaves as normative and above reproach. See her 'The Mistress–Slave Dialectic: Paradoxes of Slavery in Three LXX Narratives', *JSOT* 72 (1996), 71-87 (esp. 81-82, 86): and see Glancy's revised article in this volume, 200-211 (and especially 208-10).

[55] Like the matriarch as well, she requires supernatural intervention to achieve her wish, and she is removed from direct contact with both the deity and those outside her own family. See Bow and Nickelsburg, 'Patriarchy', 130 (59 in this volume); and Nowell, *Book of Tobit*, 109, on additional connections to the matriarch.

[56] Nowell, 'Book of Tobit', 145; Bow and Nickelsburg, 'Patriarchy', 129-30 (58-59 in this volume), offer an extended comparison of the prayers of Sarah and Tobit.

ἀπάγξασθαι) connects her to Abimelech (Judg. 9.54), Saul (1 Sam. 31.4-5), Ahitophel (2 Sam. 17.23), and Zimri (1 Kgs 16.18) even as her decision not to take her life distinguishes her from this not entirely positive cohort.[57] For the men, suicide is preferable to the shame they would face from death by the hand of a women, death from the enemy on the battlefield, or certain death for an act of betrayal. Their motives are political and self-preserving. Sarah's motive is her concern for *her father's* shame (Tob. 3.10).

The distinctions in the sufferings of Tobit and Sarah reveal additional gender-coded emphases. For example, both characters deal with the borders between life and death: Sarah wishes to produce an heir for her father and so continue the community; inversely, Tobit wishes to bury the dead and so bring closure to that same community. But Tobit can carry out his duties independently; Sarah requires the help of a man.

Second, Tobit's blindness recapitulates a conventional description of the unfaithful community. Refusing to acknowledge the workings of their deity, Israel became spiritually blind and then removed from the sight of Jerusalem's glory. The metaphoric connections of Israel with blindness are themselves gender-exclusive. While Raphael explicitly associates demonic difficulties with both men and women, only men get cataracts (6.8-9).[58]

Third, Tobit is, like Abraham and Job, afflicted by the deity: the angel informs him that '[W]hen you did not hesitate to get up and leave your dinner in order to bury the dead, I was sent to put you to the test' (12.13-14). Sarah is not afflicted by the deity and she is not tested: she is afflicted by a demon about whom she herself may be ignorant, and her husbands are killed. Further, Tobit is blinded because he fulfills the religious duty of burying a corpse; Sarah is tormented for being a single, childless woman. Pointing to the parallels 3.7 and 3.16-17, Patricia Bruce proposes that Tobit's blindness is comparable to Sarah's demonic plague: both suffer from a disability.[59] Here too the distinctions are gender-coded. Tobit's blindness is the result of his physical activity out-of-doors; Sarah's widowhood is the result of attacks in the bedroom. Tobit concludes that his blindness is caused by his sin (3.3, 6), although the narrator presents him as

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[57] On the connections among these figures, see Anathea Portier-Young, 'Alleviation of Suffering in the Book of Tobit: Comedy, Community, and Happy Endings', *CBQ* 63 (2001), 35-54 (45-46).

[58] Nowell, *Book of Tobit*, 151 n. 71. Richard Bauckham, 'Tobit as a Parable for the Exiles of Northern Israel', in *Studies in the Book of Tobit: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (ed. Mark Bredin; LSTS, 55; London: T&T Clark International, 2006), 140-63 (149), correctly sees Tobit as modeling 'the story of Israel' but his suggestion — 'Sarah models the story of the city of Jerusalem, often portrayed as a woman or, more specifically, a bride' — overreads the metaphor.

[59] Bruce, 'Constructions of Disability', 256 n. 10.

blameless, and Tobit elsewhere agrees. Sarah has no explanation for her misfortune, and no theological response. All she can do is insist upon her innocence (3.12).[60]

Finally, Tobit's burials are of unidentified members of the community who die outside the home. The concern for burial indicates an anxiety to have a stable resting place. By interring his coreligionists, Tobit stakes out the land as a parcel of sacred — that is, Israelite — space. Conversely, corpses are piling up at Sarah's house, and she is the direct occasion of them. While Tobit lays the corpse to rest and thus places the dead body in its appropriate locale, Sarah is the indirect cause of her suitors' deaths and so she brings about category confusion: dead men in the bedroom where life (specifically: conception) is the desired outcome. Nor is disposing of corpses at Sarah's house depicted with either solemnity or sacrality. We are left with the macabre (and comedic) picture of Raguel's arranging for a grave to be dug even as the wedding feast is underway, just in case husband number 8 succumbs as well (8.8-9). As János Bolyki observes, Raguel 'really becomes ridiculous because of being afraid of becoming ridiculous'.[61]

Given the popularity of the Greek tragedies, *Tobit*'s original readers might have also picked up a gendered determination. 'In Greek tragedy, defiers of the ban on burial are often women, heroines',[62] and most notably, Antigone. For this Jewish text, Antigone's role goes to Tobit. Sarah does not have Antigone's heroic role in the burying of her own husbands; she is thus neither ideal Romantic heroine nor ideal Tragic heroine. She is principally object, and victim, and problem. She needs to be married; she is the object of a demon's lust; she is the proximate reason seven men have died. At best we may weep for her, as Kierkegaard does: 'I have read about many griefs, but I doubt there is to be found a grief as profound as the one in this girl's life'.[63] We should also fear her, since, albeit through no fault of her own, she brings death within her household.[64] She is 'every Israelite male's nightmare, and her own nightmare'.[65]

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[60] Kiel, 'Tobit's Theological Blindness', 286 n. 1, offers a more positive reading of Sarah's prayer: 'if Tobit's theological explanation of his plight turns out to be simplistic, Sarah's character should perhaps be commended for resisting a simple doctrine of retribution to explain her own situation'.

[61] János Bolyki, 'Burial as an Ethical Task in the Book of Tobit, in the Bible and in the Greek Tragedies', in Xeravits and Zsengellér, eds., *Book of Tobit*, 89-101 (94).

[62] Bolyki, 'Burial as an Ethical Task', 98.

[63] Quoted by Hugh Pyper, '"Sarah Is the Hero": Kierkegaard's Reading of Tobit in *Fear and Trembling*', in Bredin, ed., *Studies in the Book of Tobit*, 59-71 (59).

[64] See Mordechai A. Friedman, 'Tamar, a Symbol of Life: The "Killer Wife" Superstition in the Bible and Jewish Tradition', *AJSR* 15.1 (1990), 33-35. Zimmerman, *Book of Tobit*, 62-63, adduces *b. Yeb.* 64b, on the danger of the *qatlanit*, the 'killer' wife who has survived three husbands.

[65] Pyper, '"Sarah Is the Hero"', 67.

Tobit takes Antigone's role: fulfilling the *mitzvah* of burying corpses, he violates the commands of the king (1.18). He also transgresses a number of boundaries. Attending a corpse brings the living into contact with the dead, and so the distinction that needs to be maintained between the two for society to exist is temporarily compromised. As Num. 19.11 states, 'Whoever touches a corpse shall be ritually unclean for seven days'. Second, burying means opening the earth, but not, as in agricultural endeavors, to create new life.

Because the corpse mediates between life and death, it is shrouded in ritual. Kristeva states: 'connected with excrement and impure on that account (cf. Deuteronomy 24:1), the corpse is to an even greater degree that by means of which the notion of impurity slips into that of abomination and/or prohibition... [The corpse] is above all the opposite of the spiritual, of the symbolic, and of divine law.'[66] That the exilic state forces Tobit to come into frequent contact with corpses shows the chaos of the Diaspora. Indeed, Tobit finds Israelite corpses 'thrown outside the wall of Nineveh' (ἐρριμμένον ὀπίσω τοῦ τείχους Νινευῆ) and so on the town garbage dump (Tob. 1.17).[67] The situation is one of both boundary transgression and 'decomposition'. And this state is emphasized. Nowell observes that in 'a book of 244 verses, 53 verses, or almost 22 per cent, contain one or more words referring to death or burial'.[68]

The chaos of the muddied boundary between life and death directly impacts Tobit, since the connection between corpse and excrement is directly played out on his body. As Douglas notes, 'The body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious.'[69] Here anthropological categories confirm Tobit's paradigmatic function. His body represents the borders Israel should have maintained: 'All my brothers (οἱ ἀδελφοί μου) and those from my family/race (οἱ ἐκ τοῦ γένους) ate the bread of the gentiles (τῶν ἄρτων τῶν ἐθνῶν); but I preserved my soul (συνετήρησα τὴν ψυχήν μου) from eating' (1.10-11). That is, he did not eat what was unclean. Beate Ego notes his motivation: he was 'mindful of God' (1.12); for Ego, the phrase may allude to Deut. 8.18 and could

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[66] J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection* (trans. L.S. Roudiez; New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 109; cf. her comment on p. 3: 'If dung signifies the other side of the border, the place where I am not and which permits me to be, the corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything'.

[67] So Dancy, *Shorter Books*, 19.

[68] Nowell, *Book of Tobit*, 203, using Sinaiticus.

[69] Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 115. On p. 124 Douglas notes that 'when rituals express anxiety about the body's orifices the sociological counterpart of this anxiety is a care to protect the political and cultural unity of a minority group'. Tobit connects the body, eating, and death in 1.16.

even 'be understood as a sort of abbreviation referring to the record of God's involvement with his people'.[70]

In terms of the plot, the role of food serves to distinguish Tobit's body from those of others who would compromise Jewish identity. At the same time, food — broadly defined — is an ever-present danger, especially in the Diaspora. Tobit attempts to establish appropriate border: he leaves his dinner to bury a corpse (Tob. 2.4) and stays outside after the burial in self-imposed exile from his house 'because I was unclean/defiled/ polluted' (μεμιαμμένος, 2.9). In a nice example of structural irony, Tobit leaves the good food, and his body is invaded by digested waste product (2.5-8).[71]

Parallels between Tobit and his son confirm the problematic relationship between commandments and pollution. Both the father's duty to bury and the son's duty to marry and reproduce involve crossing boundaries. On the one hand, Tobit's actions connect him to his ancestors, and Tobias's role is directed toward his descendants. On the other hand, burial involves corpse-pollution, and marriage involves sexual relations and so emissions, which are themselves ritually unclean (Lev. 15.16-18). Leviticus 22.4 connects death and emissions directly: 'Whoever touches anything that is unclean through contact with the dead or a man who has had an emission of semen…' Given the cause of Tobit's predicament (i.e., corpses and excrement) and the threat to Tobias (i.e., a demon who prevents the consummation of a marriage) it is appropriate that the curse recuperate both the threatening and the polluting.

The cures confirm the type of evil in question. And each form originates in the bizarre tale of a ravenous fish that threatened to devour Tobias as he was washing in the Tigris (Tob. 6.1-8).[72] The fish conforms to the trope of eating which is so significant to the structure of this narrative. Also revealing its structural cohesion. The fish transgresses two borders: it leaves its natural habitat (it 'leaped up from the river' [ἀνεπήδησεν ἰχθὺς ἀπὸ τοῦ ποταμοῦ]), and it sought to become the consumer rather than the consumed ('it would have swallowed the young man' [6.3]). This fish, which transgresses the natural relationship between human and animal, will be used to eliminate the demon who also seeks to muddy human/non-human borders. According to Sinaiticus,

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[70] Ego, 'Book of Tobit and the Diaspora', 48.

[71] Building on the original version of this paper, Naomi S. Jacobs, 'Food and Eating', in Xeravits and Zsengellér, eds., *Book of Tobit*, 121-38, notes, 'Almost every chapter in Tobit refers, in one way or another, to food or eating' (125). See also Jacobs's revised and extended study in this volume, 78-97.

[72] Moore, *Tobit*, 199; Cousland, 'Comedy in Error', 549 n. 74. According to A and B, the fish threatened to devour him; in S, it threatens to devour his foot. Structurally, in Sinaiticus the foot offers a parallel to Tobit's head. Sinaiticus also adds that it was a large (*megas*) fish.

the fish wanted to devour Tobias's 'foot', which could be a reference to his genitalia. Thus the fish threatens the very purpose of Tobias's life: find a wife and start a family. Finally, the fish cements the connection between Tobit and Tobias: both are unexpectedly attacked by unlikely animals doing unlikely things; both are rescued through angelic intervention.

Following Raphael's direction, Tobias catches the fish, removes its gall, heart, and liver, and eats part of the rest. Sinaiticus notes that the remainder was salted, which at least suggests that the detritus was not quite so malodorous. The organs of the dead fish are then used to heal the living. Raphael tells Tobias: 'You must therefore anoint [your father's] eyes with the gall; and when they smart he will rub them, and will cause the white films to fall away, and he will see you' (11.8). Tobit's problem arises from his intense interaction with problematic categories: corpses and excrement. He is therefore apotropaically healed with the gall (χολή). The term in the Septuagint translates the Hebrew מררה, which runs the semantic gamut from 'bitterness' to 'poison' (cf. Job 13.26; 16.13; 20.14, 25). The same Greek word is also used for a poisonous herb which may be hemlock, ראש, in Deut. 29.17 and Ps. 68.22; and לענה, wormwood (Prov. 5.4; Lam. 3.5). The use of poison or bitterness to bring life and sight exaggerates and so reestablishes the boundaries between clean and unclean, life and death.[73]

To release Sarah from her tormentor, Tobias 'took the live ashes of incense and put the heart and liver of the fish upon them and made a smoke' (8.3). There may be an apotropaic connection here as well between problem and cure. Sarah's plight is that she cannot produce an heir; she prays for death at the point her slaves state, 'May we never see a son or daughter of yours!' (3.8). The heart and liver, especially when enflamed, are more than centers of cognition and volition, they are also loci for reproduction.[74] In conventions that may have been

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[73] These anthropological observations neither confirm nor deny the efficacy of the treatment. Dancy, *Shorter Books*, 39, observes that fish gall was regularly recommended in ancient medical texts to treat leucoma.

[74] A. Neubauer's Aramaic ms. and the Münster text or HM (cf. also *Shab.* 110a) declare that the heart and liver are to be burned under Sarah's clothes; see Zimmermann, *Book of Tobit*, 85. This reading strengthens the connections among the organs, the heat, and fertility/insemination. On the ancient use of fumigation (of various materials) of the vagina either to insure or to prevent conception, see O.S. Wintermute, 'A Survey of Ancient Egyptian Medical Texts: Gynecological Concerns' (I thank Professor Wintermute for his permission to cite this unpublished essay). The *Oneirocritica* of Artemidorous connects the heart with marriage and the liver with the productions of male/female relationships: 'The heart signifies the wife of the dreamer or, if the dreamer is a woman, her husband, since he exercises control and authority over her body... The liver signifies a child, one's life, and anxieties' (I.44), *The Interpretation of Dreams* (trans. and comm. Robert J. White; Park Ridge, NJ: Noyes Press, 1975), 38. I thank Derek Krueger for this reference.

known to the author of *Tobit*, the heart and the liver[75] are both involved in the production of semen. In addition, the heat applied to the heart, liver, and the incense may be connected to the common cultural and medical view that heat generates sperm.[76] Both blood and semen are, in turn, interpreted as 'residues of the concoction of food'.[77]

'When the demon smelled the odor he fled to the remotest part of Egypt, and the angel bound him' (8.3). Here the sacrificial elements, incense and animal parts, are used to banish supernatural forces rather than to summon or to thank them. This inverse recapitulation of the cult sends the demon into exile. Just as improper respect for the Temple caused the exile of Naphtali, so manipulation of the sacrificial elements will allow the tribe to increase. Exaggeration of the profane — of the false sacrifice, of the expulsion of the demon — defines and reestablishes those elements that delineate the covenant community.

With Asmodeus in exile, the relationship between Tobias and Sarah can be consummated. Their marriage indicates the ideal gender roles for the future of Israel. Passive, dependent, and silent, Sarah emerges as the perfect wife. Her husband insists that their relationship is based on 'sincerity' or 'singleness of heart' as opposed to lust (οὐ διά πορνείαν ἐγὼ λαμβάνω τὴν ἀδελφήν μου ταύτην, ἀλλὰ ἐπ' ἀληθείας [8.7]); the opposition suggests that Tobias is concerned not with sexuality (the domain of the demon), but with procreation.[78]

By constraining women's roles, by using women as tokens of exchange to preserve kinship and economic ties, by depicting them as the cause as well as the locus of despair, and by removing them from direct contact with heaven, the Jewish male has brought order to his Diaspora existence. In captivity, he can assert his freedom and his self-identity by depicting the other as in captivity to him. With boundaries redefined in relation to as well as upon bodies, Tobit's family is more stable than the world of the exile, even given such peculiar phenomena as blinding through bird excrement, a carnivorous fish, an angel in disguise, and a demon with unrequited love for a nice Jewish girl.

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[75] Zimmermann, *Book of Tobit*, 9-11, 80, suggests that the heart and liver once served separate functions and notes that several versions drop the reference to the liver.

[76] See, for example, Aristotle, *Generation of Animals* 717b24 and 717a5: the emission of semen in men is due 'to the penis being heated by its movement'; further, the final concoction or 'maturation' of semen occurs through the heating of copulation. Citation from *The Complete Works of Aristotle* (ed. J. Barnes; 2 vols.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), in Thomas Laqueur, 'Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology', in *The Making of the Modern Body* (ed. C. Gallagher and T. Laqueur; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 36. Laqueur notes similar ideas in the works of Galen. For Plato, *Timaeus* 69c-72d, 86c, the liver is responsible for the baser emotions; an overproduction of semen also involves liver functions.

[77] Laqueur, 'Politics of Reproductive Biology', 37.

[78] Friedman, '"Killer Wife"', 34.

Chapter 2

Jewish Self-Awareness, Religious Identity and Acts of Resistance as Reflected in the Book of Tobit*

Renate Egger-Wenzel

Preliminary Remarks

Let us begin by mentioning briefly the benchmark data concerning the *Tobit*. Its complete text is transmitted through four Greek manuscripts. One finds the shorter version (GI) in codices Vaticanus, Alexandrinus and Venetus, which are the basis of many older translations. GII, the longer version, is transmitted within Codex Sinaiticus and seems to be close to the oldest witnesses — the Aramaic and Hebrew fragments of Qumran from the second century BCE, which contain ca. one fifth of the Greek text — as well as to the Latin. The latest version, GIII, is fragmentary and may be defined as a secondary text form.[1] The book of Tobit presumably has its origins among Aramaic speaking Jews[2] of the

* Since this essay was finalized during my period as Visiting Scholar at St John's College at the University of Cambridge, UK, I would like to express my gratitude for all the support and the opportunity of discussions with colleagues there, as well as the possibility of personal research, especially on the Ben Sira manuscripts in the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit at the Cambridge University Library.

[1] Helmut Engel, 'Das Buch Tobit', in *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (ed. E. Zenger *et al.*; Kohlhammer Studienbücher Theologie, 1.1; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 8th edn, 2012), 350-61 (351): 'kann als sekundäre Textform bestimmt werden'. Concerning the transmission of the text, cf. also Beate Ego, 'Buch Tobit' (JSHRZ, II.6; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999), 873-1007 (875-84); Jan C. Gertz, 'Das Tobitbuch (Tobias)', in *Grundinformation Altes Testament* (ed. J.C. Gertz; UTB, 2745; Stuttgart: C.H. Beck, 3rd edn, 2009), 550-55 (550); Carey A. Moore, *Tobit: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 40A; New York: Doubleday, 1996), 53-64; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Tobit* (Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 3-15; as well as the detailed studies by Christian J. Wagner, *Polyglotte Tobit-Synopse. Griechisch, Lateinisch, Syrisch, Hebraïsch, Aramaïsch mit einem Index zu den Tobit-Fragmenten vom Toten Meer* (Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen; Philologisch-historische Klasse; Treatises, 3; Sequence 258/MSU, 28; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003); and Michaela Hallermayer, *Text und Überlieferung des Buches Tobit* (DCLS, 3; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008).

[2] Engel, 'Buch', 359: 'im aramäisch sprechenden Judentum'.

Diaspora, possibly in the circles of the Tobiads.[3] Within academic literature we find datings ranging from the late Persian time until the second century BCE. The latter seems to me most likely.[4]

The fictive plot[5] of the book, which is completely independent of any historical situation, was obviously deliberately chosen by the author as an example of Jewish narrative theology[6] and for strengthening the Jewish identity of Jews living in the Diaspora, and reflects a pedagogical intent.[7] Such an endeavor requires a defense mechanism against the foreign people[8] or governmental power, strength and internal protection against one's own people who are less observant or are already assimilated.[9]

Tobit's lifespan, as chosen by the author, is a fantasy, as are other elements, including extremely long walking distances, an attacking fish, an angel as companion, and the jealous demon Asmodeus, who is in love with Sarah. According to GII, Tobit lived 113 years; according to GI, 158 years.[10] Moreover, developments within the family and historical events are distributed over several centuries:

- *Tob. 1.8.* Tobit is an orphan who was brought up by his grandmother Deborah. As the background of the whole plot is highly fictive, an allusion to the judge and prophetess, Deborah (Judg. 4.4) of the northern tribe Naphtali, Tobit's tribe, is most likely.[11] Being a prophetess or judge

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[3] Gertz, 'Tobitbuch', 554: 'Umkreis der Tobiaden'.

[4] Cf. Ego, 'Buch', 899-900.

[5] Cf. Moore, *Tobit*, 9-10; Tobias Nicklas, 'Tobit/Tobitbuch' (2005), section 2.6. Available online at http://www.bibelwissenschaft.de/stichwort/12080/ (accessed 15 August 2012); Engel, 'Buch', 283: 'fiktive Diaspora-Erzählung mit jüdisch-jerusalemischer Orientierung'; Gertz, 'Tobitbuch', 554: 'Die zahlreichen historischen und geographischen Ungenauigkeiten…'

[6] Helmut Engel, 'Auf zuverlässigen Wegen und in Gerechtigkeit. Religiöses Ethos in der Diaspora nach dem Buch Tobit', in *Biblische Theologie und gesellschaftlicher Wandel* (FS N. Lohfink; ed. G. Braulik, W. Groß and S. McEvenue; Freiburg: Herder, 1992), 93-100 (84): 'ein Muster jüdischer narrativer Theologie'.

[7] Cf. Nicklas, 'Tobit', section 2.5 and especially section 6.

[8] See Gabriele Faßbeck, 'Tobit's Religious Universe between Kinship Loyalty and the Law of Moses', *JSJ* 36.2 (2005), 173-96 (195): '[I]t propagates the importance of family-centred piety in seclusion from the gentile world'.

[9] Cf. Engel, 'Wegen', 94-95; Engel, 'Buch', 360; Ego, 'Buch', 901; 'Tobit', 577.

[10] Similarly, Tobit's son, Tobias, lived for 127 years according to GI, and 117 years according to GII.

[11] Differently Moore, *Tobit*, 110: 'This was undoubtedly a common name for Naphtalian girls… Here is one of those ironies or "patriarchal twists"'; Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 111: 'Nothing more is known about Tobit's (great) grandmother except the name she bears, Deborah, which is that of another famous woman, a prophetess of the tribe of Naphtali mentioned in Judg. 4:4-6';

also includes a teaching function. As Tobit is an orphan, his grandmother takes on this role and teaches her grandson (GI: *ἐνετείλατο* Δεββωρα ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ πατρός μου; GII: τὰς *ἐντολάς* ἃς *ἐνετείλατο* Δεββωρα ἡ μήτηρ Ανανιηλ τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν)[12] according to the Torah of Moses (GII: ἐν τῷ νόμῳ *Μωσῆ*).[13]

- *Tob. 1.4.* As a young man, Tobit experiences the fact that his own tribe Naphtali 'fell from the house of Jerusalem' (GI: ἀπέστη τοῦ οἴκου Ιεροσολύμων), that is, 'broke away from the house of David, my ancestor, and from Jerusalem' (GII: ἀπέστησαν ἀπο τοῦ οἴκου Δαυιδ τοῦ πατρός μου καὶ ἀπὸ Ιερουσαλημ) and went to make offerings at the sanctuaries of Dan and Beth-El (cf. 1 Kgs 12.28-33; GI: ἔθυον τῇ Βααλ τῇ *δαμάλει*;[14] GII: ἐθυσίαζον ἐκεῖνοι τῷ *μόσχῳ*[15] ὃν ἐποίησεν Ιεροβεαμ ὁ βασιλεὺς Ισραηλ ἐν Δαν) erected by Jeroboam I (931–910 BCE).[16]
- *Tob. 1.10.* In 722 BCE Tobit's tribe, Naphtali, was taken into captivity with the other Northern tribes by the Assyrian king, Shalmaneser V (726–721 BCE).[17]
- *Tob. 1.13-22.* During the reigns of Shalmaneser V[18] and Sennacherib (705–680 BCE) Tobit, a Jew, builds up his career as an international purchasing agent at the Assyrian court and is able to make a fortune. However, he loses this fortune by flouting the Assyrian law and digging graves for the murdered members of his own people. Through the help of

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Helen Schüngel-Straumann, *Tobit* (HThK.AT; Freiburg: Herder, 2000), 58: 'Debora (= Biene) hat nichts zu tun mit der Prophetin und Richterin Debora von Ri 4f'.

[12] Cf. Judg. 4.6: οὐχὶ *ἐνετείλατο* κύριος ὁ θεὸς Ισραηλ.

[13] Cf. Josh. 23.6; 1 Kgs 2.3; 2 Kgs 14.6; 23.25; 2 Chron. 23.18; 35.19; 1 Ezra 8.3; 9.39; Ezra 3.2; 7.6; Neh. 8.1; Tob. 6.13; 7.13 (GII: τῇ βίβλῳ Μωυσέως); GII 7.13; Mal. 3.24; Bar. 2.2; Dan. 9.11; 13.3; Lk. 2.22; 24.44; Jn 7.23; Acts 13.38; 15.5; 28.23; 1 Cor. 9.9; Heb. 10.28. See also the combination of βίβλος with Μωϋσῆς in GII Tob. 6.13; 7.12, 13; 1 Ezra 5.48; 7.6, 9 (cf. Mk 12.26), which is an argument for the existence of a fixed Pentateuch at the time when GI and II were written (Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 51: 'A widely-held dating of the Book of Tobit situates it rather somewhere between 225 and 175 B.C.'). In his prologue, Ben Sira's grandson goes a step further with the three-fold canon: διὰ τοῦ *νόμου* καὶ τῶν *προφητῶν* καὶ τῶν *ἄλλων τῶν κατ'αὐτοὺς ἠκολουθηκότων*.

[14] Cf. 1 Kgs 12.28, 32.

[15] Cf. 1 Kgs 18.26; 2 Chron. 11.15; 13.8.

[16] Cf. Juha Pakkala, 'Jerobeam I. (König von Israel; 10. Jh. v. Chr.)' (2011), section 3. Available online at http://www.bibelwissenschaft.de/stichwort/22356/ (accessed 15 August 2012): 'Die traditionellen Datierungen seiner Regierungszeit (z.B., 931/0-910/09, 927/6-907 und 922-901 v. Chr.) beruhen auf der biblischen Chronologie'.

[17] Cf. Tob. 13.3, 5, 8.

[18] Engel, 'Wegen', 84 n. 9, bridges the time gap to Sennacherib with the assumption: 'Dieser Name steht offenbar für Salmanassar V. *und* Sargon II [721-705 v. Chr.]'.

his nephew Ahikar — the minister of finance, cupbearer and keeper of the signet — Tobit is rehabilitated during the reign of Esarhaddon (680–669 BCE).

- *Tob. 14.4c.* At this point in the narrative, reflecting the prophet Jonah (GI)/Nahum[19] (GII), Tobit announces the destruction of Nineveh in 612 BCE. However, the book of Jonah cannot be taken as a direct reference since it reports the salvation of that city.
- *Tob. 13.16-18.* Within his praise to God (ch. 13), Tobit mentions Jerusalem as still in existence (v. 10). He then postulates the demolition of the city in 586 BCE, and prophesies its gorgeous rebuilding for eternity. Tobit's hymn therefore has an eschatological touch to it.
- *Tob. 14.4f-i (GI)/o-s (GII).* In his farewell address, Tobit stresses the scattering, or rather the banishment, of his people from the 'good land' (= Judah). However, he then calls attention to *Jerusalem* (GII speaks of the whole land of Israel and *Samaria*),[20] which will become an uninhabited desert, and to the burning down of the Temple (GII adds: 'the house of God will be desolate'). Both text versions emphasize once more the scattering of 'our brothers' into 'captivity' (GII). It is worth noting that this is the only time that Samaria is mentioned throughout the whole of *Tobit*.[21]
- *Tob. 14.5.* Tobit then offers the prospect of a happy return from Babylonian captivity (538 BCE), as well as the rebuilding of the Temple[22] (GI: οὐχ οἷος ὁ πρότερος; GII: οὐχ ὡς τὸν πρῶτον; 515 BCE) and of Jerusalem.
- *Tob. 14.15.* Tobit's son, Tobias, finally hears about the downfall of Nineveh and about the beginning of Xerxes's reign (483–465 BCE).

By way of these data, the time perspective widens, starting with Tobit's life story[23] in 1.1 and becoming the story of the tribe. This story extends over several centuries through various contexts (social, political, national and international), from pre-national times until 465 BCE, possibly even until the destruction of the sanctuary at Gerizim in 129/128 BCE by John Hyrcanus I, or until Samaria's final decline in 112/111 BCE.

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[19] Cf. Nah. 1.9–3.19.

[20] The combination of Samaria and Jerusalem, both of which will be destroyed, is repeatedly found in 2 Kgs 21.13; Jdt. 1.9; Mic. 1.1, 5; Isa. 10.10-11; Ezek. 23.4.

[21] Here we could possibly identify an allusion to the destruction of the Samaritan Temple by John Hyrcanus I in 129/128 BCE.

[22] Cf. Ezra 6.13-22.

[23] The genre is to some degree similar to an autobiography, as with the books of Job, Ezra 7.27–9.15, Nehemiah, Dan. 7.2-12, and more.

Governmental Power and Abuse of Power

The Period Following the Division of the Kingdoms (from 931 BCE)

The reader of *Tobit* who knows the Bible will be reminded of 1 Kgs 12.1-19: Solomon's successor, Rehoboam, did not listen to the older generation's advice but, supported by his contemporaries, refused to ease the duties of the northern tribes (12.4: עבדה/δουλεία; על/κλοιός) and gave the cold shoulder to their representatives during the negotiation process. In response, the northern tribes broke away under Jeroboam's leadership. Jeroboam became king of the Northern Kingdom and carried out a religious-cultic separation from the Temple of Jerusalem. With reference to this historical event, Tobit stresses that his own tribe, Naphtali, also separated from the south in this way (Tob. 1.4: ἀφίστημι; only 1.5 GII: συναφίστημι). In other words, they supported Jeroboam's revolt and, according to GI, made offerings 'unto the heifer Baal' (ἔθυον τῇ Βααλ τῇ δαμάλει; cf. 1 Kgs 12.28: ἐποίησεν δύο δαμάλεις χρυσᾶς) and, according to GII, 'to the calf' (ἐθυσίαζον ἐκεῖνοι τῷ μόσχῳ) that Jeroboam had erected in Dan (12.29: נתן/δίδωμι; Tob. 1.5 GII ὃν ἐποίησεν). *Tobit* does not mention Beth-El as the location of the second sanctuary. With the establishment of new politics and a new cult, Tobit is the only one who feels constrained (1.6[24] — GI: κἀγὼ μόνος; GII: κἀγὼ μονώτατος) to continue his pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

During the Exile in Nineveh

Significantly, *Tobit* — especially chs. 1, 13 and 14 — mentions reprisals, governmental power and its abuse. In ch. 1, at the very beginning of the narrative, Tobit describes his situation and explains how he came to Nineveh in captivity and what the living conditions were for him and for his people. Chapter 13 portrays the destruction of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, including Jerusalem, and ch. 14 depicts the decline of Nineveh at which time Tobit's son, Tobias, is still alive.

LXX (NETS)[25]	GI	GII
1.2	[Tobit] who was taken into captivity [αἰχμαλωτεύω] in the days of Enemessaros, the king of Assyrians, from Thisbe…	[Tobit] who in the days of Enemessaros, king of the Assyrians, was taken into captivity [αἰχμαλωτεύω] from Thisbe…

[24] Cf. Tob. 5.13-14.

[25] The English text in this table is quoted directly from Alexander A. di Lella's translation in *A New English Translation of the Septuagint and the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under that Time* (= NETS; ed. Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 456-77. Initial ellipses (where necessary) are omitted at the start of these quotations so as to maintain uniform left-hand alignment in columns GI and GII.

1.10	Now when I was taken captive [αἰχμαλωτίζω] into Nineue…	After I was taken captive [αἰχμαλωτίζω] to the Assyrians and when I was taken captive [αἰχμαλωτίζω] into Nineue…
1.15	But when Enemessaros died, Sennachereim his son became king in his place, and his roads became unstable [ἀκαταστατέω]…	But when Enesmessar died and Sennachereim his son became king in his place, then the roads to Media became unfit [ἀφίστημι]…
1.17	I would give my bread to the hungry [πεινάω] and clothing to the naked [γυμνός], and if I saw anyone of my race dead and cast out behind the wall of Nineue [τεθνηκότα καὶ ἐρριμένον ὀπίσω τοῦ τείχους Νινευη]…	I would give my bread to the hungry [πεινάω] and clothing to the naked [γυμνός], and if I saw anyone of my people dead and cast out behind the wall of Nineue [τεθνηκότα καὶ ἐρριμένον ὀπίσω τοῦ τείχους Νινευη]…
1.18	And if Sennachereim the king killed [ἀποκτείνω] anyone, when he came fleeing from Judea… For he killed many in his anger [πολλοὺς γὰρ ἀπέκτεινεν ἐν τῷ θυμῷ αὐτου].	And if Sennachereim the king killed [ἀποκτείνω] anyone, when he came fleeing from Judea… For in his anger he killed many of the sons of Israel [πολλοὺς γὰρ ἀπέκτεινεν ἐν τῷ θυμῷ αὐτου ἐκ τῶν υἱῶν Ισραηλ]…
1.19	But one of the people of Nineue went and informed the king about me [ὑποδείκνυμι],…so I hid myself… But discovering that I was being sought out to be put to death [ὅτι ζητοῦμαι ἀποθανεῖν], I fled in fear.	Then a certain one of the people of Nineue went and informed the king about me [ὑποδείκνυμι]…so I hid myself. But when I discovered that the king knew about me and that I was being sought out to be put to death [ὅτι ζητοῦμαι ἀποθανεῖν], I was afraid and ran away.
1.20	Then all my belongings were seized [διαρπάζω], and nothing was left to me…	Then everything that belonged to me was seized [ἁρπάζω], and nothing was left to me that was not taken into the royal treasury [ἀνελήμφθη εἰς βασιλικόν]…
2.3	[O]ne of our race has been strangled [στραγγαλάομαι] and thrown into the marketplace [ἔρριπται ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ]!	[O]ne of our people has been murdered [φονεύω] and thrown into the marketplace [ἔρριπται ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ] and now lies strangled [στραγγαλάομαι] there.
2.8	He is no longer afraid to be murdered for this thing [φονευθῆναι περὶ τοῦ πράγματος τούτου].	Is he still not afraid? For he was already sought out to be murdered for this thing [ἐπεζητήθη τοῦ φονευθῆναι περὶ τοῦ πράγματος τούτου]…

3.4	[A]nd you gave us over to plunder [διαρπαγή] and exile [αἰχμαλωσία] and death [θάνατος), and for an illustration of reproach [παραβολήν ὀνειδισμοῦ] to all the nations among which we have been scattered [σκορπίζω].	And you gave us over to plunder [άρπαγή] and exile [αἰχμαλωσία] and death [θάνατος] and for an illustration and byword and reproach [παραβολήν καὶ λάλημα καὶ ὀνειδισμόν] among all the nations among which you have scattered [διασκορπίζω] us.
3.5	And now your many judgments [κρίσις] are true…	And now your many judgments [κρίσις] are true…
7.3	We belong to the children of Nephthaleim, who are captives [μαστιγόω] in Nineue.	We belong to the children of Nephthaleim, who were taken captive [αἰχμαλωτίζω] in Nineue.
13.2	For he afflicts [μαστιγόω] … [H]e leads down to Hades [ἐλεᾷ κατάγει ἕως ᾅδου]…	For he afflicts [μαστιγόω]… [H]e leads down to Hades [ἐλεᾷ κατάγει ἕως ᾅδου] in the lowest part of the earth…
13.3	[F]or he has scattered [διασπείρω] us among them.	[F]or he has scattered [διασπείρω] you among them.
13.5	And he will afflict [μαστιγόω] us for our injustices…and he will gather us from all nations among whom you have been scattered [σκορπίζω].	He will afflict [μαστιγόω μαστιγόω μαστιγόω μαστιγόω] you for your injustices…on all of you from all the nations among whom you have been scattered [διασκορπίζω].
13.6/8[26]	In the land of my captivity [ἐν τῇ γῇ τῆς αἰχμαλωσίας μου] I acknowledge him…	—
13.10/12	And may he gladden within you those who are captives [αἰχμάλωτος]…	And may he gladden within you all those who are captives [αἰχμάλωτος]…
13.12/14	—	[C]ursed will be all who cast you down [καθαιρέω] and pull down [κατασπάω] your walls, and all who overthrow [ἀνατρέπω] your towers and set your homes on fire [ἐμπυρίζω].
13.14/16	Happy are those who grieved over all your afflictions [μάστιξ]…	And happy are all the people who will grieve over you, over all your afflictions [μάστιξ]…

[26] Alternate numbering according to Alfred Rahlfs, *Septuaginta. Id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpres* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2004).

14.4	[F]or I trust what Ionas the prophet said about Nineue, that it will be overthrown [καταστρέφω]… And our kindred will be scattered [σκορπίζω] over the earth from the good land, and Hierosolyma will be desolate. And the house of God in it will be burned down [κατακαίω] and will be desolate for a time.	For I believe the word of God about Nineue, the things Naoum spoke, that all these things will come about and happen to Athour and Nineue… And our kindred, who live in the land of Israel, all will be scattered [διασκορπίζω] and taken as captives [αἰχμαλωτίζω] from the good land, and the whole land of Israel will be desolate. And the house of God will be in grief and will be burned down [καίω] for a time.
14.5	Then after this they will return from their captivities [ἐκ τῶν αἰχμαλωσιῶν(!)][27] …	Then after this they all will return from their captivity [ἐκ τῆς αἰχμαλωσίας αὐτῶν]…
14.10/8, 9	My child, see what Haman did to Achiacharos who had reared him, how he brought him from the light into darkness [ἐκ τοῦ φωτὸς ἤγαγεν αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ σκότος] and with what he repaid him… Manasses gave alms and was saved from the death trap [ἐκ παγίδος θανάτου] that they had set for him [πήγνυμι]…	[O]n that day do not spend the night within its borders. For I see that there is much injustice [πολλὴ ἀδικία ἐν αὐτῇ] within it and that much deceit [δόλος πολὺς] is accomplished within it, and they are not ashamed. See, my child, what Nadab did to Achikaros who had reared him… Now Achikaros came out into the light, but Nadab went into the everlasting darkness, because he sought to kill Achikaros [ἐζήτησεν ἀποκτεῖναι]. Because he gave alms, he came out of the death trap [ἐκ τῆς παγίδος τοῦ θανάτου] that Nadab had set for him [πήγνυμι]…
14.15	But before he died he heard of the destruction [ἀπώλεια] of Nineue, which Nabouchodonosor and Asoueros had captured [αἰχμαλωτίζω]…	And before he died he saw and heard of the destruction [ἀπώλεια] of Nineue, and he saw its captivity [αἰχμαλωσία] being led into Media, which Achiacharos, the king of Media, had taken captive [αἰχμαλωτίζω]…before he died he rejoiced over Nineue…

[27] This could be an allusion to several later deportations.

When one reads these texts concerning Tobit's life in exile, one finds several passages written in the *passive voice* that report the captivity of the Northern tribes (αἰχμαλωτεύω, 1.2; αἰχμαλωτίζω, 1.10; only in GII 7.3; 14.4) and their scattering among other peoples (14.4; only GI 3.4; 13.5; GII: 13.3). At the end of the book, a generation later, Tobias is afforded the opportunity to rejoice over the 'retributive justice' that sees Nineveh being taken into captivity (14.15).

When there is a description of God's intervention in world affairs and of his judgment (3.5), one finds the *active voice* (13.3) — especially when God chastises improper behaviour.[28]

Captivity

	GI (7×)	GII (11×)
αἰχμαλωτίζω	1.2	1.2
αἰχμαλωτίζω	1.10; 14.15	1.10 (2×); 7.3; 14.4, 15
αἰχμαλωσία	3.4, 15; 13.8; 14.5	1.3; 3.4, 15; 14.5, 15

Scattering

	GI (4×)	GII (4×)
Σκορπίζω	3.4; 13.5; 14.4	
Διασκορπίζω		3.4; 13.5; 14.4
Διασπείρω	13.3	13.3

As an exiled Jew belonging to a minority group, Tobit has a variety of miserable experiences. After Shalmaneser V's death (721 BCE), during Sennacherib's time (the text probably means Sargon II, 721–705 BCE), Tobit cannot continue with his work as a travelling salesman in Media as the roads are no longer safe enough (1.15 — GI: αἱ ὁδοὶ αὐτοῦ ἠκαταστάτησαν; GII: αἱ ὁδοὶ τῆς Μηδίας ἀπέστησαν). Presumably, this means a reduction of income for him. As he is highly committed to his religious duties, Tobit supports the poor of his people (GI: ἐκ τοῦ γένους μου; GII: ἐκ τοῦ ἔθνους μου) who are starving (τοὺς ἄρτους μου ἐδίδουν τοῖς πεινῶσιν) or who lack clothes (τὰ ἱμάτιά μου τοῖς γυμνοῖς). This almsgiving drains his funds also. Above all, he sees it as his duty to bury the murdered members (1.17: τεθνηκότα; 2.3 — GI: ἐστραγγαλωμένος; GII: πεφόνευται) of his tribe, who are thrown over Nineveh's city walls like refuse (1.17: ἐρριμμένον ὀπίσω τοῦ τείχους Νινευη) or thrown into the market place (2.3: ἔρριπται ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ). The refugees from Judah (ἦλθεν φεύγων ἐκ τῆς Ιουδαίας)[29] are also not

[28] Cf. μαστιγόω — GI: (3.9: Sarah in relation to her servant); 11.14; 13.2, 5, 10. GII: 11.14; 13.2, 5; μάστιξ: 13.16.

[29] The question here is who these fugitives from Judah, at the time of Assyrian deportation around 722 BCE, could have been. The fugitives could be an allusion to the almost unbearable

safe from the king's rage (ἐν τῷ θυμῷ αὐτοῦ); he simply kills them (1.18 [2×]: ἀπέκτεινεν). Tobit pays last respects to these murder victims by stealing their corpses — according to GII — and burying them. In this way, the king could not trace them.

Apparently, there is an order, under the threat of death, not to bury the murder victims. When a man of Nineveh observes Tobit's behaviour, he reports him to the king (1.19: ὑπέδειξε[ν] τῷ βασιλεῖ περὶ ἐμου).

The following table shows that *Tobit*'s author would like to convey the notion that the exiled minority in Nineveh faced violent death on a daily basis. Individuals were simply murdered without any reason, being strangled, killed or executed according to the king's mood.

	GI (36×)	GII (53×)
θνήσκω	1.17	1.17; 8.12
ἀποθνήσκω	1.15, 19; 3.6, 9; 4.2, 3, 4; 6.15 (2×); 7.11; 8.10, 21; 10.2, 11; 11.9; 14.12, 14, 15 (2×)	1.8, 14, 15, 19; 3.6 (2×), 9, 10; 4.2, 4; 6.14 (2×), 15; 7.11; 8.10, 21; 10.2, 11, 13; 11.9; 14.2, 3, 11, 12, 14, 15 (2×)
θάνατος	3.4; 4.2, 10; 6.13; 12.9; 14.10	3.4; 4.2; 6.13; 12.9; 14.10 (2×)
ἀποκτείνω	1.18 (2×), 21; 3.8, 15	1.18 (2×), 21; 3.8 (2×), 15; 6.14, 15; 14.10, 11
νεκρός	2.8; 12.12, 13	2.8; 5.10 (2×); 12.12, 13
στραγγαλάομαι	2.3	2.3
φονεύω	2.8	2.3, 8

After Tobit is reported, he has to hide (ἐκρύβην) while the Assyrians are searching for him (ζητοῦμαι). Since a death sentence awaits him (ἀποθάνεῖν; cf. 2.8 — GI: οὐκέτι φοβεῖται φονευθῆναι περὶ τοῦ πράγματος τούτου; GII: οὐ φοβεῖται οὐκέτι ἤδη γάρ ἐπεζητήθη τοῦ φονευθῆναι περὶ τοῦ πράγματος τούτου), he has to flee (GI: ἀναχωρέω; GII: ἀποδιδράσκω; 1.19; cf. 2.8 GII: ἀποδιδράσκω). As a further consequence, Tobit is robbed of all his possessions (1.20 — GI: διηρπάγη πάντα τὰ ὑπάρχοντά μου καὶ οὐ κατελείφθη μοι; GII: ἡρπάγη πάντα ὅσα ὑπῆρχέν μοι καὶ οὐ κατελείφθη μοι οὐδέν ὃ οὐκ ἀνελήμφθη εἰς τὸ βασιλικόν). GII makes it clear: Tobit's property is added to the king's treasury. Thus, the family

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suppression of the Jews in Judea during the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, which GII stresses with the following phrasing: ἐν ἡμέραις τῆς κρίσεως ἧς ἐποίησεν ἐξ αὐτοῦ ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῦ οὐρανοῦ περὶ τῶν βλασφημιῶν ὧν ἐβλασφήσεν (cf. βλασφημία additional only in 1 Macc. 2.6; 2 Macc. 8.4; 10.35; 15.24; Ezek. 35.12; Dan. 3.96 and βλασφημέω in 2 Kgs 19.4, 6, 22; 2 Macc. 10.34; 12.14; Isa. 52.5; Dan. 3.96; 14.8). Cf. *b. Bab. Qam.* 81a: a 'dead body, which anyone finds, [he] has to bury [and] should acquire [the right to be buried on] the spot [where found]'. *Giṭ.* 61a also mentions the duty to bury the dead, even enemies; cf. Deut. 21.22-23; Josephus (*C. Ap.* 2.211).

that is left behind no longer has a livelihood. After his high-ranking nephew, Ahikar, intervenes, Tobit is allowed to return. However, Tobit — the head of the family — subsequently goes blind for several years. Initially, Ahikar takes over the support of his uncle's family, but then Tobit's wife, Anna, has to make a living by weaving. That leads to conflicts within the family.[30]

In 14.4, Tobit follows Jonah/Nahum in predicting Nineveh's destruction (GI: καταστραφήσεται), which may constitute a kind of comfort for the exiled family. For Tobit's son, Tobias, Nineveh's destruction becomes a fact (14.15). GII extends the prophecy in Nahum and other Israelite prophets (cf. Nah. 1.9-3.19), declaring that the whole of Assyria will be destroyed, but does not go into further detail.

In addition, GII refers to the Israelite brothers' exile: 'they will all be scattered [διασκορπίζω] and taken into captivity [αἰχμαλωτίζω] from the good land [ἐκ τῆς γῆς τῆς ἀγαθῆς]. The whole land of Israel will become a wilderness; even Samaria and Jerusalem will be a wilderness! For a time, the house of God will be desolate and will be burned [καίω]' (14.4).[31] Ostensibly, the text speaks about the decline of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, but may also allude to the persecutions perpetrated by the Seleucids as well as the destruction of the Samaritan sanctuary in Gerizim during the time of the Hasmonean John Hyrcanus I (129/128 BCE). By contrast, GI only mentions the expulsion (σκορπίζω) of the brothers from the 'good land' (ἀπὸ τῆς ἀγαθῆς γῆς), and predicts that Jerusalem will become a desert and the 'house of God' (οἶκος τοῦ θεοῦ) will be burnt down (κατακαίω). Therefore, whereas GII has both kingdoms — Israel and Judah — in view, GI, following its overall policy, still views the destruction of the Southern Kingdom as a future development.

Tobit's testament (14.1-11) at the end of the book contains a warning to his son not to remain in Nineveh after his father's death, but to leave immediately for Media so as to avoid suffering much injustice (πολλὴ ἀδικία) and treachery (δόλος πολὺς). Tobias should not risk the same experience as Tobit's nephew, Ahikar, whose fosterling, Nadab, laid out 'the deadly trap' for him (GII: ἐκ τῆς παγίδος τοῦ θανάτου)[32] from which he had to be rescued. Tobit's warning is also connected to a metaphor of light and darkness (14.10). We find such metaphors widely distributed in Qumran literature, so that the presence of this metaphor could provide a hint for dating this part of the book.

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[30] Renate Egger-Wenzel, 'The Emotional Relationship of the Married Couple Hannah and Tobit', in *Family and Kinship in Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature* (ed. A. Passaro; DCLY, 2012; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 41-76.

[31] English citations are from the NAB unless otherwise indicated.

[32] According to GI, Ahikar's opponent is Haman, who sets a snare for Manasseh, but he himself gets trapped. Cf. Moore, *Tobit*, 292-93; Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 333-34.

Peaceful Co-Existence as a Reaction to Governmental Power

After the Division of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, Still in the Homeland (1.4-9)

For young Tobit, the division of the Kingdoms, with the erection of the two rival sanctuaries in Beth-El and Dan, must have seemed like a betrayal of 'the ways of truth and justice' (GI: ὁδοῖς ἀληθείας ἐπορευόμην καὶ δικαιοσύνης/GII: ἐν δικαιοσύναις; 1.3). A political and religious breakaway affects 'the house of Jerusalem, which was chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, that they should sacrifice there, where the temple of the habitation of the Most High was consecrated and built for all ages'. GII formulates this description of Jerusalem in a more sophisticated fashion: the betrayal happens to 'the house of David, my ancestor, and…Jerusalem, the city that had been singled out of all Israel's tribes that all Israel might offer sacrifice there' (1.4). Thus the ten northern tribes are seen as having committed high treason in political and religious terms.

Tobit's tribe, Naphtali, also breaks away from the South. It is only Tobit (1.6 GI: κἀγὼ μόνος; GII: κἀγὼ μονώτατος) who, following the Torah,[33] still goes on pilgrimage to Jerusalem three times a year, taking with him the expected offerings[34] (1.4-6) of the first fruit and the tithe (1.6).[35] This activity is also attributed to Azariah/Raphael in 5.14: 'I knew *Hananiah* and *Nathan*, the two sons of the great *Shemeliah*. They used to go to Jerusalem with me, where we would worship together. They were not led astray'.

Tobit offers the firstlings,[36] the tithe of the field crop[37] and the wool of the first sheep-shearing (1.6).[38] Verses 7 and 8 explain the different tithes more precisely:

- The *first tithe* belongs to the priests and Levites who serve in Jerusalem (1.7 GI: τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν τοῖς υἱοῖς Ααρων πρὸς τὸ θυσιαστήριον πάντων τῶν γενημάτων τὴν δεκάτην ἐδίδουν τοῖς υἱοῖς Λευι τοῖς θεραπεύουσιν ἐν Ιερουσαλημ). GII is more specific and also mentions, alongside the recipients, such offerings as wheat, wine, oil, pomegranates, figs and other fruit: τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν τοῖς υἱοῖς Ααρων πρὸς τὸ θυσιαστήριον καὶ τὴν

[33] Cf. Exod. 23.14-15, 17; 34.23-24; Num. 28.26; Deut. 16.16; 1 Kgs 9.25 and in the rabbinic tradition *m. Ḥag.* 1.

[34] Cf. 1 Kgs 12.26-33; 2 Chron. 11.16 and in rabbinic tradition *m. Zeb.* 13.

[35] Cf. Johann Gamberoni, 'Das "Gesetz des Mose" im Buch Tobias', in *Studien zum Pentateuch* (FS W. Kornfeld; ed. G. Braulik; Vienna: Herder, 1977), 227-42 (234-37); Ego, 'Buch', 920-21.

[36] Cf. Num. 18.12-18, 24-32 and in addition *m. Bikk.* 3.

[37] Cf. Lev. 27.30-33; Num. 18.20-32; Deut. 14.22-29; 18.4-5; 26.12-16; 2 Chron. 31.4-6 and in Jewish tradition *m. Ma'as.*, *passim*; *m. Pe'ah* 8.

[38] Cf. Deut. 18.4; Job 31.20 and *m. Ḥul.* 11.

δεκάτην τοῦ σίτου καὶ καὶ τοῦ οἴνου καὶ ἐλαίου καὶ ῥοῶν καὶ τῶν σύκων καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ἀκροδρύων τοῖς υἱοῖς τοῖς θεραπεύουσιν ἐν Ιερουσαλημ.[39]

- Tobit converts the *second tithe* into cash in order to finance his pilgrimage[40] to Jerusalem. GII adds: 'Six years in a row, I used to give a second tithe in money, which each year I would go to pay in Jerusalem' (1.7).
- Tobit uses the *third tithe*, a third of his annual income (!), according to the orders of his grandmother, Deborah, who educated him after his father passed away. GI is somewhat vague concerning the recipients, but GII explains: 'I gave to orphans, widows, and converts who had joined the Israelites. Every third year I would bring them this offering, and we ate it in keeping with the decree laid down in the Mosaic law (ἐν τῷ νόμῳ Μωσῆ)[41] concerning it, and according to the commands (κατὰ τὰς ἐντολάς ἃς ἐνετείλατο) of Deborah, the mother of my father Hananiel; for my father had died and left me an orphan' (1.8).

Apart from all these cultic/religious duties that he follows precisely, Tobit is also attached — for practical reasons — to the Jerusalem Temple and ignores the sanctuaries of the Northern Kingdom. Avoiding the danger of mixed marriages, which is a big issue for Jews in the Diaspora, he marries Anna, a woman of his own lineage, and later stresses to his son that the family descends from prophets such as Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (4.12).[42] Tobit thus seems to be able to keep the Mosaic Law without any governmental or societal censure and free from any sanctions mentioned within the book. In the best case scenario, Tobit is probably known as a hyper-religious[43] eccentric, an odd person, a 'madcap' who only makes life impossible for himself but does not pose any serious threat to the authorities of the Northern Kingdom.

In the Exile at Nineveh

Tobit's and Ahikar's Life in Public. It is worth noting that an exiled Jew who belongs to a disadvantaged group is said to hold a high position at court. Tobit becomes a purchaser of goods for Shalmaneser and, as a commercial traveller,

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[39] Cf. Num. 18.24-32 and *m. Ter.*, *passim*; *m. Ma'as. Sheni*, *passim*.

[40] Cf. Num. 18.24-32.

[41] Cf. Deut. 14.28-29; 26.12-14 and *m. Pe'ah* 5 and 8.

[42] *Tobit* mentions endogamy several times: 1.9; 3.15; 4.12-13; 6.12-13, 16; 7.10, 12; cf. Gen. 11.29, 31; 24.4; 25.20; 28.1-4; 29.15-30; Exod. 34.16; Deut. 7.3; Ruth 3.9-12; 4.1-12; Ezra 9; Neh. 13. The issue occurs several times in *m. Našim* and esp. *Ket.* See also Egger-Wenzel, 'Relationship', 43-46.

[43] Gamberoni, 'Gesetz', 241, comments as follows: '...eine Haltung, die bloßen Legalismus überbietet'.

builds up huge assets (ten silver talents).[44] One might almost think of Tobit as the king's finance minister. But Tobit attributes this good fortune to God's activity: 'the Most High granted me favor and status [χάριν καὶ μορφήν][45] with Shalmaneser' (1.13).[46]

Esarhaddon becomes king after a coup that his father, Sennacherib, does not survive. In those difficult times, Esarhaddon appoints Tobit's nephew, Ahikar, as finance minister (1.21: ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν ἐκλογιστίαν τῆς βασιλείας αὐτοῦ; 1.22: ἐκλογιστής), head of administration, cupbearer and keeper of the signet. So, despite being a foreigner and a Jew, Ahikar becomes the man who is second in charge of the Assyrian state (1.21-22) and is therefore able to save Tobit's life and enable his return. Ahikar is even able to support his blind uncle for a certain time (2.10) and later travels with his nephew, Nadab,[47] from the province Elymais, a distance of ca. 400 kilometers, to his other nephew Tobias's wedding feast in Nineveh (11.19). This means, all in all, that high-ranking officials such as Tobit and Ahikar had no travel restrictions, held a certain influence at court and were able to accumulate wealth.

Tobit's Private Life. Of major importance in Tobit's private life are the following: caring for needy members of his people according to the laws regarding the poor in the *Tanakh*, the celebration of cultic feasts, kosher food, cultic purity, marriage to the right person (see below under '*Marriage*') and teaching his son other *mitzvoth* according to Jewish traditions.

Charity. As a wealthy man, Tobit is able to support members of his tribe who are not so well off. He practices ἐλεημοσύνη toward them, which is usually translated as 'giving alms';[48] however, such a translation does not convey the

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[44] A talent of silver currently corresponds to 41 kg of that very precious metal, which can be estimated at c. €11 480 (2/5/2014). The equivalent value at the time of *Tobit*, during the second century BCE, is much higher.

[45] God expresses his mercy on two (GII) or three (GI) occasions toward various people: (a) toward Tobit at the beginning of the book (1.13), which results in Tobit's attaining the post in the king's court; (b) in 7.17 (only GI) toward Sarah who, according to her mother, deserves happiness after her seven husbands were murdered by Asmodeus; and (c) at the end of the book in 12.18, when Raphael emphasizes that God wishes to look after Tobit's family.

[46] Cf. Gen. 39.3, 22; 41.51; Dan. 1.17.

[47] Sadly, Tob. 14.10 (GII) insinuates that Nadab seeks his uncle Ahikar's life by means of his treacherous behaviour. Once again, bad times are mentioned, and it seems that in those times even family bonds are not trustworthy. This situation points to a political terror regime like that of Antiochus IV Epiphanes or, e.g., in the recent Nazi dictatorship.

[48] Francis M. Macatangay, *The Wisdom Instructions in the Book of Tobit* (DCLS, 12; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 106-108.

precise sense. This topic has already been dealt with extensively elsewhere[49] and its further consideration here would go beyond the scope of this essay. To summarize, Tobit feeds people who are starving, dresses the naked and provides those who mourn with meals.[50] In this way, Tobit keeps the laws concerning the poor and does not forget to stress this fact repeatedly. He also teaches his son, Tobias, to offer wide-ranging assistance to the poor and sees himself as setting an example.[51]

Remuneration. Dealing fairly with poor people also means paying needy workers on the same day that they do their work (4.14),[52] so as to shield them from further suffering. According to 5.15, Tobit and Tobias are keen to pay Azariah/Raphael, who 'serves them', on a daily basis: 'For each day I will give you a drachma as wages' (GI: δραχμὴν τῆς ἡμέρας; GII: τὴν ἡμέραν δραχμήν). There may be some cautious criticism concerning Anna's masters here (5.15), because the text of 2.11-13 is not quite clear whether or not they pay Anna immediately on delivery of the woven goods.[53]

Feast of Weeks. The only religious feasts that are mentioned in *Tobit* are Shavuot and presumably Passover. At home, in the Northern Kingdom, the Feast of Weeks (2.1: ἐν τῇ πεντηκοστῇ τῇ ἑορτῇ [ἡμῶν] ἥ ἐστιν ἁγία ἑπτὰ ἑβδομάδων) was the obligatory time for the dedication of the first fruit for the tithe to the Temple. In the Diaspora, however, this duty could not be practiced and was therefore completely transformed into a family celebration. Accordingly, a festive meal is mentioned (ἄριστον καλόν). In addition, the book of Tobit links the feast with Tobit's happy return after his escape. This emphasizes the feast's character as a private family celebration even more. Even so, the homecomer also involves the public when he sends his son to find poor people who have remained true to the Lord (2.2 — GI: τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἡμῶν ἐνδεῆ ὃς μέμνηται τοῦ κυρίου; GII: πτωχὸν τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἡμῶν ἐκ Νινευητῶν αἰχμαλώτων ὃς

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[49] Cf. Ego, 'Buch', 890-91; Schüngel-Straumann,'Tobit', 101-102; Paul Deselaers, 'Tobit (Buch)', in *Neues Bibel-Lexikon.* III. *O-Z* (Düsseldorf: Benzinger Verlag, 2001), 880-83 (882); Engel, 'Buch', 286-87; Alexander A. Di Lella, 'Two Major Prayers in the Book of Tobit', in *Prayer from Tobit to Qumran: Inaugural Conference of the ISDCL at Salzburg, Austria, 5–9 July 2003* (ed. R. Egger-Wenzel and J. Corley; DCLY, 2004; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 95-115 (103); Egger-Wenzel, 'Relationship', 56-59.

[50] See 2.5-6; 4.18; cf. 2 Sam. 3.35; Jer. 16.7; Ezek. 24.17 and *y. Mo. Qaṭ.* 3.8.

[51] See Tob. 1.3, 16-17; 2.1; 4.7-11, 16-17, 21; 12.8-10; 14.2, 10-11; cf. Deut. 15.9-11; Job 31.16-20; Sir. 3.30; 29.8-13; Isa. 58.7; Mt. 6.1-4; 25.35-40; Lk. 6.30; 2 Cor. 9.7; and Renate Egger-Wenzel, 'Armut im AT', in *Herders Neues Bibellexikon* (Freiburg: Herder, 2009), 47-48.

[52] See Tob. GI 2.12, 14; 4.14; 5.3, 15-17; 12.1; GII 2.12, 14; 5.3, 7, 10, 15-16; 12.1-3, 5; cf. Lev. 19.13; Deut. 24.14-15; Job 7.2; Jer. 22.13; Mt. 20.8 and *m. Bab. Meṣ.* 9.12.

[53] That Anna got her wages for her weaving work only once a year may be ruled out for practical reasons. The family could not have survived that long.

μέμνηται ἐν ὅλῃ καρδίᾳ αὐτου). These people are invited to join him at his table. The book of Tobit does not make any theological connection between the harvest feast and the gift of the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai.[54] An assumption that it was written during the persecution of the Jews by Antiochus IV Epiphanes would explain this theological omission: one could only own the written law at the risk of one's life during that time (1 Macc. 1.58).[55]

Passover. Tobit himself reports that Anna makes a living from weaving. She sends pieces of work to the/her masters[56] (GII τοῖς κυρίοις αὐτῶν) who pay her. GII also follows the Macedonian-Seleucid calendar: 'the seventh day of the month of Dystrus' (ἐν τῇ ἑβδομῃ τοῦ Δύστρου), matching the Gregorian calendar's date of the second of February (Jewish *Shevat*),[57] which fits perfectly into the spring lambing season, meaning that Anna could indeed have obtained a young he-goat (Tob. 2.12 — GI: ἔριφον; GII: ἔριφον ἐξ αἰγῶν)[58] as a gift. Given that Dan. 8.5 (GI: τράγος αἰγῶν ἤρχετο ἀπὸ δυσμῶν ἐπὶ προσώπου τῆς γῆς; GII: τράγος αἰγῶν ἤρχετο ἀπὸ λιβὸς ἐπὶ προσώπου πάσης τῆς γῆς; cf. 8.8, 21) uses the goat as a symbol for Alexander the Great who conquers the whole known world, the young he-goat may also be alluding to the general political situation obtaining at the time of the book's composition.

Dating the book to this period could also touch on cultic matters. Citing Bertrand, Moore mentions that Tobit does not want to use a stolen animal for

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[54] See Exod. 19.1: 'In the third month after their departure from the land of Egypt, on its first day, the Israelites came to the desert of Sinai'. In the rabbinic tradition, all covenants were established in the third month (= *Sivan*), including Moses' covenant at Sinai; cf. the book of *Jubilees* from the second century BCE (relates to *Shavuot*, *Jub.* 6.15-22).

[55] 1 Macc. 1.56-57: 'And when they had rent in pieces the books of the law [βιβλία τοῦ νόμου] which they found, they burnt them with fire. And whosoever was found with any the book of the testament [βιβλίον διαθήκης], or if any committed to the law [τῷ νόμῷ], the king's commandment was that they should put him to death.'

[56] Frank Zimmermann, *The Book of Tobit: An English Translation with Introductions and Commentary* (Jewish Apocryphal Literature Series, 5; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), 58, translates with 'the plural of majesty', which is questionable.

[57] Cf. Zimmermann, *Tobit*, 59-59: 'roughly corresponding to March'; Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 140.

[58] Τὸν ἔριφον ἐξ αἰγῶν occurs only one other time in Gen. 38.20. In this verse, Judah sends his Adullamite friend with a he-goat to retrieve the signet ring, cord and staff (which can be equated with his identity card) that he has left in pledge with the assumed harlot, Tamar. Tamar's actions were intended to ensure the survival of her family, as are Anna's in *Tobit*. That is why scholars partly accuse Anna of betraying her husband (cf. the description by Moore, *Tobit*, 133-34). In passing, one should also mention that ἔριφος occurs 24 times: it is related to offerings 10 times, 3 times to tricky acts and in Gen. 38.17, 20 and 23 as wages for sexual services. The word αἴξ occurs 75 tines, 54 of which are within a cultic sphere, 3 times in the context of intended deception (Jacob vs. Laban; Joseph's death is falsely reported to Jacob; Michal hides David) and once when Tamar is performing a sexual favour (Gen. 38.17, 20).

the *Seder* (cf. Exod. 12.2-5; 2 Chron. 35.7-8: ἔριφος; 2 Chron. 35.7: αἴξ).[59] Taking into account the date of GII, the he-goat could possibly have been used for the *Seder*, as the seventh of *Dystrus*/second of February/*Shevat* occurs before the Passover date in the month of Nissan. Thus, the Jewish dietary laws are involved once again (see below).

Dietary laws. These laws go back to the following prescription: 'You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk' (לא תבשל גדי בחלב אמו/οὐχ ἑψήσεις ἄρνα ἐν γάλακτι μητρὸς αὐτου; Exod. 23.19; Deut. 14.21; cf. Exod. 34.26: οὐ προσοίσεις...).[60] In addition, Lev. 22.27-28 stipulates that the young animal should stay with its mother for seven days before being offered to God but, after seven days, it may be slaughtered provided that it is not slaughtered on the same day as its mother. Furthermore, GII Tob. 2.12 emphasizes the employers' intention concerning the goat with the words 'for the hearth' (ἐφ' ἑστιᾷ). They seem to wish to supply Anna's family with a good meal, but to avoid any transgression of the dietary laws or of the practice of *kosher* slaughter (cf. Deut. 12.21).[61] Tobit himself emphasizes that he observes the dietary laws and avoids the food (literally 'bread')[62] of foreign people (Tob. 1.10 — GI: ἐγὼ δὲ συνετήρησα τὴν ψυχήν μου μὴ φαγεῖν; GII: ἐκ τῶν ἄρτων τῶν ἐθνῶν),[63] by contrast to other members of his tribe (1.10: ἤσθιον ἐκ τῶν ἄρτων τῶν ἐθνῶν).

Ablutions.[64] When Tobit touches the corpses of murdered members of his tribe, he becomes impure (2.9 — GI: μεμιαμμένος; GII: ἐλουσάμην) and must then wash himself (ἐλουσάμην, 2.5). This practice is described in detail in Num. 19.11-22. Perhaps Tob. 7.9 GII ('When they had washed [ἐλούσαντο], bathed [ἐνίψαντο], and reclined to eat and drink') is also an allusion to the נטילת ידים, the hand-washing ritual that must be completed before the bread is blessed (*m. Yad.* 1–2).

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[59] Cf. Zimmermann, *Tobit*, 59; Moore, *Tobit*, 133.

[60] This variant of the verb προσφέρω in Exod. 34.26 constitutes a *terminus technicus* for a cultic offering. This verb occurs 163 times in the Hebrew Bible, 142 of which in the context of offered sacrifices. The noun used with this verb in Tob. 2.12 is ἔριφον (GII ἐξ αἰγῶν) and in 2.14 GI it is δῶρον.

[61] Cf. Lev. 3.17; 7.26; 17.12, 14; Deut. 12.16; 15.23.

[62] Given that bread is often a euphemism for sexual intercourse (Gen. 39.1-9; 1 Kgs 21.1-7; Prov. 6.24-29), one wonders whether or not Tobit's refusal to eat the bread of foreigners may act as a metaphor for his refusal to have intercourse with women outside his kinship group. Such an interpretation would fit well with the concept of endogamy that governs sexual relations in *Tobit*. Cf. Stefan C. Reif, 'Bread with Another Meaning?', *Leket Israel Newsletter* (2013), available online at http://leket.org.il/english/text/970.aspx (accessed 30 April 2014). Also in D. Lipton, ed., *Leket Food and Torah Project* (provisional title; forthcoming).

[63] Cf. Lev. 11; Deut. 14.3-21; Dan. 1.8; Jdt. 10.5; *Jub.* 22.16.

[64] Cf. to this Ego, 'Buch', 931, with an interesting reference to the Qumran fragments of Tobit.

Marriage (6.12–8.9, 19).[65] As early as 6.12 (cf. 7.9), Azariah/Raphael announces that he will act as Tobias's matchmaker and ask Raguel, who lives in Ecbatana, for the hand of Sarah, his only daughter. Tobias is her only relative (GI: σὺ μόνος εἶ ἐκ τοῦ γένους αὐτῆς; GII: υἱος ἄρσην οὐδὲ θυγάτηρ ὑπάρχει αὐτῷ πλὴν Σαρρας μόνης καὶ σὺ ἔγγιστα αὐτῆς εἶ παρὰ πάντας ἀνθρώπους κληρονομῆσαι αὐτήν) meaning that her heritage belongs to him (6.12 — GII: τὰ ὄντα τῷ πατρὶ αὐτης σοὶ δικαιοῦται κληρονομῆσαι; 6.13 — GI: τὴν κληρονομίαν σοὶ καθήκει λαβεῖν ἤ πάντα ἄνθρωπον; GII: σοὶ κληρονομία καθήκει λαβεῖν τὴν θυγατέρα αὐτοῦ παρὰ πάντα ἄνθρωπον).

Tobias's companion assures him that, according to the Law of Moses (GI: κατὰ τὸν νόμον Μωσῆ; GII: κατὰ τὴν κρίσιν τῆς βίβλου Μωυσέως), Raguel is allowed to marry his daughter to Tobias alone (cf. Num. 36.1-13). In other words, Sarah is designated solely for Tobias.[66] GII stresses that only he is permitted to take her as a bride: 'You have the right to marry her…so that we may take her as your bride… [W]e will have the wedding feast for her… For he knows that you, more than anyone else, have the right to marry his daughter (cf. Tob. 7.10 — GI: καθήκει τὸ παιδίον μου; GII: οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ἄνθρωπος ᾧ καθήκει λαβεῖν Σαρραν τὴν θυγατέρα μου πλὴν σοῦ ἀδελφε ὡσαύτως) …brother; we will speak about this girl tonight, so that we may arrange her engagement to you (μνηστευσόμεθά σοι αὐτὴν)… [W]e will take her (λημψόμεθα αὐτὴν) and bring her back with us to your house (ἀπάξομεν αὐτὴν μεθ' ἡμῶν εἰς τὸν οἶκόν σου)' (6.13 GII).

Azariah/Raphael reminds Tobias of his father's advice (GI: τῶν λόγων ὧν ἐνετείλατό σοι ὁ πατήρ σου; GII: τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ πατρός σου) 'to marry a woman from your own ancestral family' (6.16 — GI: γυναίκα ἐκ τοῦ γένους σου; GII: γυναίκα ἐκ τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ πατρός σου; cf. 7.12-13 — GI: ἄπαγεν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα σου; GII: ἄπαγεν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα σου) and promises him that the demon, Asmodeus, will be chased away by the smell of the incense made from the fish's heart and liver (6.17). He also states that the couple should pray together, that they will be blessed with children (6.18) and that they will not lack affection for each other (6.19). After Azariah's/Raphael's negotiations on Tobias's behalf, Raguel indicates to his future son-in-law that he, as the closest kinsman (7.10 — GII: σὺ ἔγγιστά μου), has the right to marry Sarah but also warns him about

[65] On this topic, cf. Thomas Hieke, 'Endogamy in the Book of Tobit, Genesis, and Ezra–Nehemiah', in *The Book of Tobit — Text, Tradition, Theology: Papers of the First International Conference on the Deuteronomical Books, Pápa, Hungary, 20–21 May, 2004* (ed. G.G. Xeravits and J. Zsengellér; JSJSup, 98; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 103-20; Nicklas, 'Marriage', 139-54; Geoffrey D. Miller, *Marriage in the Book of Tobit* (DCLS, 10; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011).

[66] Zimmermann, *Tobit*, 82: 'because he is the surviving kinsman, and as *levir*, for such he is, according to the conception of his function in Tobit, he is duty-bound to marry her and no one else'.

Asmodeus (7.11). Raguel states that he does not have the authority (ἐγὼ οὐκ ἔχω ἐξουσίαν δοῦναι αὐτὴν ἑτερῳ ἀνδρί) to give his daughter to another husband.[67] But Tobias is impatient and refuses to dine before his future father-in-law makes a decision.[68] So Raguel agrees to the engagement (GI: *κομίζου αὐτὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν κατά τὴν κρίσιν σύ*,; GII: αὐτὴ δίδοταί σοι *κατά τὴν κρίσιν τῆς βίβλου Μωυσέως* καὶ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ κέκριταί σοι δοθῆναι *κομίζου τῆν ἀδελφήν* σου ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν σὺ ἀδελφὸς εἶ αὐτῆς καὶ αὐτὴ ἀδελφή σου δέδοταί σοι ἀπὸ τῆς σήμερον καὶ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα), summons his daughter, hands her to Tobias (GII: λαβόμενος τῆς χειρὸς αὐτῆς παρέδωκεν αὐτὴν αὐτῷ[?]) according to the Law of Moses (GI: κατὰ τὸν νόμον Μωυσέως; GII: κατὰ τὸν νόμον καὶ κατὰ τὴν κρίσιν τὴν γεγραμμένην ἐν τῇ βίβλῳ Μωυσέως) and blesses the couple (GI: εὐλόγησεν αὐτούς; 7.12/13; 10.11).

Afterwards, the bride's father calls for the bride's mother, Edna, to act as a witness, sets down the marriage contract (the *Ketubah*)[69] and signs it with a seal (7.13 — GI: βιβλίον ἔγραψεν συγγραφήν καὶ ἐσφραγίσαντο; GII: βιβλίον καὶ ἔγραψεν συγγραφὴν βιβλίου συνοικήσεως). Finally, the wedding feast takes place (7.14). The bride's mother then prepares the room for the wedding night and comforts her daughter (7.16-17). As soon as the bridal couple is alone in their room, Tobias follows Azariah's/Raphael's instructions and is able to put the demon to flight (8.2-3). Afterwards, Tobias and Sarah pray together (8.4-8) and sleep through the night (GI: ἐκοιμήθησαν τὴν νύκτα). GII makes it clear: they sleep with each other (ἐκοιμήθησαν ἀμφότεροι τὴν νύκτα; 8.9). Subsequently, they celebrate a fourteen-day wedding feast with the family in Ecbatana (8.19/20) and, according to GI, a seven day-feast follows with Tobias's family in Nineveh thereafter (11.19).[70]

According to rabbinic tradition concerning the legal act of marriage, a three-step process is to be followed: first the transfer of money, second the *Ketubah* and third the physical consummation of the marriage. However, according to

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[67] Given Raguel's statement, one wonders whether or not Raguel had acted wrongly or without authorization by previously giving his daughter, Sarah, in marriage to seven other men, who were all killed by Asmodeus (Tob. 3.8). Nothing is mentioned about the kinship status of these seven men and Sarah's family. Cf. Sarah's argument in 3.15, that she does not need to wait any more for a close relative to marry (GI: οὐδὲ ἀδελφὸς ἐγγὺς οὐδὲ ὑπάρχων αὐτῷ υἱός; GII: οὐδὲ ἀδελφὸς αὐτῷ ἐγγὺς οὔτε συγγενὴς αὐτῷ ὑπάρχει).

[68] This verse may contain an allusion to a custom for the bride and groom to fast on their wedding day. This custom is usually dated to the early Middle Ages and is still practiced today. However, this dating should, perhaps, be reconsidered as the text relates to a period prior to the post-rabbinic tradition.

[69] Merten Rabenau, *Studien zum Buch Tobit* (BZAW, 220; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), 118, rightly notes: 'Neben einem Papyrus aus Elephantine besitzen wir im Buch Tobit den ältesten Beleg für diesen Rechtsakt im Judentum'. Cf. also Heinrich Groß, *Tobit — Judit* (NEB; Würzburg: Echter, 1987), 36; Ego, 'Buch', 900-971; and Miller, *Marriage*, 92-129, among others.

[70] Cf. Judg. 14.10-20 and *y. Ket.* 1.1 (25a).

the Mishnah (*Qid.* 1.1), each single act on its own makes a marriage valid.[71] The transfer of money from the groom to the bride is absent in *Tobit*. The text mentions that Tobias gets half of Raguel's estate as dowry on the occasion of the couple's farewell (8.21; 10.10). After Tobias's parents-in-law pass away, the couple (GII: ὑμέτερόν ἐστιν; 8.21) inherits the second half of Sarah's legacy (14.13), according to Raguel's promise in 8.21.

Other mitzvoth. Apart from Tobit's exemplary acts towards the needy people of his tribe, who lack clothes or food, other *mitzvoth* are also mentioned: children's duty[72] to honour their parents (4.3-4),[73] which is also extended to their parents-in-law (10.13/12);[74] and the command to conceive children (Gen. 1.28), as per Raguel's parting blessing to Tobias and Sarah (Tob. 10.11).

The burial of tribal members is even more important, particularly if it concerns exposed corpses, a matter of daily occurrence in Nineveh. The burial of one's own parents is a child's particular duty (4.4; 14.12). This topic will be dealt with later, as this activity cannot take place in secret or exclusively within the family circle.

All these religious duties and customs[75] testify to a strong tendency of separation on the part of Tobit, a Jew living in the Diaspora. He follows a different way of life in an effort to maintain his own Jewish identity. This way of life usually concerns the family's private life that is not conspicuous to the public eye, and therefore does not interfere with either Tobit's (1.13) or Ahikar's high social positions (1.22).

Other Examples of a Career at Court. Of course, we know of another member of a disadvantaged group who makes his career at court: Joseph. He is sold by his brothers as a slave, becomes the overseer of the Egyptian official, Potiphar, is imprisoned because Potiphar's wife falsely accuses him of sexual harassment and

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[71] This is a regulation which is documented from the second century CE on.

[72] Macatangay, *Wisdom*, 31, emphasizes: 'Deuteronomistic elements relative to the virtuous life, expressed in parent-child relationship, respect for women, care for the poor and the practice of prayer enjoy more than a passing reference in the story'.

[73] The perils mentioned, and experienced by the mother, relate to the process of birth-giving (cf. Sir. 7.27). Regarding parents, see also Exod. 20.12; Deut. 5.16; 27.16; Prov. 19.26; 20.20; 28.24; 30.17; and Sir. 3.1-16, among others.

[74] There is no specific law to this effect in rabbinic writings, but some special status is presupposed in *b. Mo. Qaṭ.* 20b.

[75] See the list of duties and customs provided by Günter Mayer, 'Lebensnorm und Lebensform in den griechisch überlieferten jüdischen Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit', in *Recht und Ethos im Alten Testament — Gestalt und Wirkung* (FS H. Seebass; ed. S. Beyerle, G. Mayer and H. Strauß; Neukirchen–Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1999), 283-313 (293-95). Mayer's list leads one to dispute Macatangay's assertion that 'cultic functions of religion seem to fade into insignificance' (Macatangay, *Wisdom*, 63).

is finally set free because of his ability to interpret dreams. Ultimately, he becomes the administrator of Egypt and marries Aseneth, the daughter of a priest of On (Gen. 39–41).

Nehemiah also achieves a high position of trustworthiness at the Persian court. He is King Artaxerxes's cupbearer and is later appointed governor of the Yehud province and tasked with rebuilding Jerusalem (Neh. 2; 5.14-19). Ezra, another Jew, receives the order to rebuild the Temple and to reorganize the cult in Jerusalem (Ezra 7).

Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael are further examples. They receive special education at the king's court (Dan. 1.3-7). Being Jews, they wish to keep Jewish dietary laws by eating only vegetarian food. Their request is granted after their chosen food is seen to be sufficiently nutritious (Dan. 1.8-16; cf. Tob. 1.10-11). After King Nebuchadnezzar tests their wisdom, they become official royal advisers (Dan. 1.18-21).

Possible Forms of Resistance

What can individuals do if they disagree with political events, encounter misgovernment or the misuse of state power against minorities or conquered peoples? There are roughly three possibilities of resistance — with flexible variations of course — when the pressure becomes unbearable.

- A first possibility is a revolt, an example of which is the Maccabean revolt against the edict[76] of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (167 BCE onwards). As a result of this revolt, the Jews were ultimately able to establish the Hasmonean Kingdom after some 400 years of foreign rule.
- A second possibility is maintaining a completely uncompromising religious position and choosing the road of martyrdom. This was the choice of old Eleazar (2 Macc. 6.18-31) and the seven sons of the unnamed mother (2 Macc. 7) who, according to rabbinic tradition, was called Hannah (Anna).

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[76] Peter F. Mittag, *Antiochos IV: Epiphanes. Eine politische Biographie* (KLIO NF, 11; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2006), 256-68, especially 257 (selection of the table): 'gegen die Tora gerichtet: Gesetz wird missachtet (1Makk 1,49; 2Makk 5,61), Abschaffung der täglichen Opfer (1Makk 1,45), unreine Opfer (1Makk 1,47; 2Makk 6,5), Beschneidungsverbot (1Makk 1,48), Sabbate und Feste werden entweiht (1Makk 1,45; 2Makk 6,6); fremde Kulte: Errichtung fremder Altäre (1Makk 1,47), Verehrung fremder Götter (1Makk 1,43), Verehrung des Zeus Olympios (2Makk 5,62), Zwangsteilnahme an Dionysien (2Makk 6,7); sonstiges: Tempeldirnen (2Makk 6,4), monatl. Feier des kgl. Geburtstages (2Makk 6,7), Gebot gilt reichsweit (1Makk 1,41)'.

- A third possibility is represented by *Tobit*. In his private life, Tobit remains an observant Jew who teaches his son God's commandments, as he himself was taught by his grandmother.[77] However, Tobit practices civil disobedience by secretly burying the murdered members of his tribe (Tob. 1.17-19; 2.7-8; 12.12). As a result, he has to endure the danger of being discovered and executed. Tobit's behaviour effectively demands that one has to arrive at some sort of arrangement with the political powers in charge. As a result of compromising, one might easily be regarded as a traitor by both opposing groups, since one has followed the route of taking small unspectacular steps of resistance, rather than dramatic ones like those of the Maccabees or the martyrs. Indeed, Tobit is sold out by a member of his own tribe and loses his fortune as a result. He and his family become poor and Tobit has to flee. When he returns, he becomes blind so that his wife Anna has to make a living for the family.

The resistance of disadvantaged people is a sort of daily insurgency, quietly expressed through everyday life and therefore less spectacular and less dramatic than the first two possibilities mentioned.[78]

Resistance Sets Limits to Power

By burying the corpses of the murdered members of his tribe, Tobit signals resistance against the political system for himself, his family and the society in which he lives in Nineveh. Although he tries to do this secretly (1.18 — GI: ἔθαψα αὐτοὺς κλέπτων πολλούς; GII: ἔθαψα πολλοὺς …καὶ ἔκλεπτον τὰ σώματα αὐτῶν καὶ ἔθαπτον; 2.7 ὅτε ἔδυ ὁ ἥλιος), his civil disobedience[79] puts his life under threat of death and leads to the loss of his livelihood.

	GI	GII
θάπτω[80]	1.17, 18, 19; 2.7, 8, 9; *4.3, 4; 6.15; 8.12;* 12.12; *14.9, 11, 12, 13* (15×)	1.17, 18 (2×); 2.4, 7, 8; *4.3, 4; 6.15; 8.12;* 12.12; *14.2, 8, 11, 12, 13* (16×)
τάφος	4.4, 17; *6.15; 8.10, 18* (5×)	4.4; *6.15; 8.10, 11, 18* (5×)

[77] Cf. Tob. 4.5: πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας παιδίον κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν (GII only: τοῦ κυρίου μνημόνευε καὶ μη θελήσῃς ἁμαρτάνειν (GII: ἁμαρτεῖν) καὶ παραβῆναι τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ…

[78] Cf. Anathea Portier-Young, *Apocalypse against Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 5.

[79] Cf. Amy-Jill Levine, 'Tobit: Teaching Jews How to Live in the Diaspora', *Bible Review* 8.4 (1992), 42-51, 64 (44); Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 120.

[80] Italicized occurrences deal with children's duty to bury their parents, which in *Tobit* is extended to their parents-in-law, and Raguel's assumption in 8.12 that Tobias will require burial as he is most likely to be killed by Asmodeus.

With these burials, Tobit is carrying out a duty that is based on Deut. 21.22-23.[81] According to this text, people who have been executed should be buried on the same day (כי לא תקברנו ביום ההוא/ἀλλὰ ταφῇ θάψετε αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ, v. 23). In Nineveh, however, discharging this duty is strictly prohibited, and any breach reported to the authorities (1.19). Jewish corpses are typically thrown over the city walls (1.17) or simply left in the market place (2.3) to be devoured by animals.[82]

Resistance Strengthens Identity

By passing on his traditions to Tobias, Tobit preserves his Jewish identity. Keeping the commandments and performing his religious duties occurs mainly within his private circle. Only the burial of murdered victims is an act that cannot be hidden completely. But what constitutes a Jewish identity? In general, an individual is regarded as a Jew[83] either through Jewish parentage or by conversion. In Tobit's family, Jewish identity is guaranteed through *endogamy*. The מלה ברית (circumcision) takes place on the eighth day after a male child's birth and, with that, the child is accepted into the covenant of Abraham (Gen. 17.10-13). This is an essential act of religious membership. Keeping *Shabbat* (Exod. 20.8; Deut. 5.12) and the *Kashrut laws* (Lev. 11; Deut. 14.3-21) are other important parts of Jewish identity.[84] *Marriage* within the Jewish tribal community is also essential. But *Tobit* goes even further and restricts marriage in its eponym's family to his own kinship group within the tribe of Naphtali. Given that the tribes of the Northern Kingdom disappeared or existed only as a mixed population after 722 BCE, emphasizing the tribe of Naphtali in this way may be a polemic against assimilation with the ruling powers.[85]

However, two indispensable attributes of Jewishness, namely circumcision and keeping Shabbat, are not even mentioned in *Tobit*. Why is the author silent in this regard? Dating the composition of *Tobit* to the second century BCE or, more precisely, the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (215–163 BCE), presents a possible solution to this problem. In Greek understanding, circumcision was

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[81] Cf. Josh. 8.29; 2 Sam. 21.1-14; Mt. 27.57-60; Jn 19.31.

[82] Cf. Deut. 28.26; 1 Kgs 14.11; 21.24; Jer. 7.33; Ezek. 29.5.

[83] Cf. *m. Qid.* 3.12; *y. Qid.* 68b relates to Deut. 7.3-4.

[84] Ego, 'Buch', 922, writes: 'Man wird hier wohl an den Verzehr unreiner Tiere (vgl. Lev. 11.-12.29-46; Dtn 14,3-21) sowie an das Essen von Blut (vgl. Gen. 9,4; Lev. 7,26-27) zu denken haben… Die Bewahrung der Speisegebote spielt in der Diaspora — wie das Endogamiegebot — im Hinblick auf eine Wahrung der Identität eine vorrangige Rolle.' Mayer, 'Lebensnorm', 308-13, specifically mentions characteristics of Jewish identity for those who live in the Diaspora, as does Faßbeck, 'Tobit's Religious Universe', 181.

[85] Cf. GI: Tob. 1.1, 2, 4, 5; GII: 1.1, 2, 4, 5; 7.3.

equal to the mutilation of a perfect [male] body. At the gymnasium, this practice would have become obvious. It was not for nothing that Jews tried to undo circumcision, as reported in 1 Macc. 1.15 ('They covered over the mark of their circumcision and abandoned the holy covenant; they allied themselves with the Gentiles and sold themselves to wrongdoing'). In addition, abandoning circumcision shows a tendency 'to defile themselves with every kind of impurity and abomination; so that they might forget the law and change all its ordinances' (1 Macc. 1.48-49).[86]

Such a historical context also helps to explain the missing Shabbat observance that, as is well known, represented the risk of death at that time. In addition, it should be recalled that later on the Romans negatively regarded this Jewish practice as exemplifying the 'laziness of the Jews'.[87]

Conclusion

Tobit offers a 'theology of resistance with apocalyptic elements'. It starts off as a family story and then extends to a tribal and people's history.

We find apocalyptic elements in the fictive framework of Nineveh. Assyria was the symbol of the cruelest warfare: staking people, mass executions and a scorched-earth-policy (Lev. 19.23-25!). Therefore, Assyria was seen as one of the worst enemies that Israel had ever encountered in its history. In the Seleucid era, a similar situation obtains during the rule of Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

In addition, another apocalyptic element is when Azariah/Raphael pretends to be human but acts as a non-human being on earth until he reveals himself in ch. 12. The light–darkness metaphor in ch. 14 also links *Tobit* to the Qumran literature.

The maintenance of Judaism within a non-Jewish surrounding is expressed through the observance of *Kashrut* laws, endogamy, several *mitzvoth* (burial of tribal members, etc.) and ritual ablutions. However, circumcision and

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[86] On the topic of circumcision, see Molly Whittaker, *Jews and Christians: Graeco-Roman Views* (Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200 BC to AD 2006; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 80-85.

[87] Cf. Augustine, *City of God* 6.11, in *St. Augustin's City of God and Christian Doctrine* (ed. P. Schaff; NPNF, 102; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1883), 120-21, available online at http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf102.iv.VI.11.html (accessed 30 October 2014). Augustine refers to Seneca (4 BCE–65 CE) in this context: 'Among the other superstitions of civil theology, also found fault with the sacred things of the Jews, and especially the sabbaths, affirming that they act uselessly in keeping those seventh days, whereby they lose through idleness about the seventh part of their life, and also many things which demand immediate attention are damaged'.

Shabbat — two essential features of Jewish practice — are completely absent, possibly because of the sociological, political and geographical circumstances pertaining to the author's time.

Some Reflections from a Feminist Viewpoint

From a feminist point of view there are several important points that also need to be mentioned.

- In the absence of men who are competent to fulfill the duty of religious education, women take over this role. In *Tobit* it is the grandmother Deborah who teaches her grandson Tobit according to the Law of Moses, thus forming his Jewish identity. In addition, the name Deborah reminds the reader of a once great judge and prophetess in Israel's history.
- Furthermore, the lack of a capable male family member means that a woman such as Anna has to make a living for the family. Her husband is blind and their only child seems not to be old enough.
- Early in *Tobit*, a type of *Ketubah* is mentioned which protects a wife's existence, even in the case of divorce.

In this context, the bride's mother, Edna, is specifically reported as witness to the legal act. All in all, women in *Tobit* are highly respected and fill an important role in a diasporic society.[88]

[88] For different views, see Levine, 3-22; Jacobs, 78-97; Bow and Nickelsburg, 48-63, in the present volume.

CHAPTER 3

PATRIARCHY WITH A TWIST: MEN AND WOMEN IN *TOBIT**

Beverly Bow and George W.E. Nickelsburg

Religious belief and practice combined with a dominant concern for family life lie at the heart of the fictional composition known as *Tobit*. Although we cannot be certain to what extent *Tobit*'s story world reflects the real world of the second-century BCE author,[1] the text does seem to treat certain events as commonplace. *Tobit* thus provides a glimpse of the everyday life and belief of families in the period of formative Judaism. Moreover, the story is compelling; through narrative and dialogue, the members of the two families, joined by marriage, emerge as full personalities rather than as static figures. The consequent humanity of these characters crosses the boundaries of time; the modern reader can identify with the wife's irritation at her husband's false accusation, the mother's worry over her son on his journey, the father's joy at his daughter's wedding.

In this essay, we shall focus on the manner in which *Tobit* depicts religious and family life in relation to men and women. We shall argue that there is a definite dichotomy in the portrayal of the two sexes: while women are normally confined to the family and its practical concerns, men operate in a sphere that encompasses religious activity and the world outside the family and household. Nonetheless, although the text presents a patriarchal worldview in describing the social and religious functions of its characters, certain elements in the story strain against this ideological norm. In other words, there are twists that express the tension between the patriarchal social structure and elements of characterization depicted within it.

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[1] On the dating, see Frank Zimmerman, *The Book of Tobit* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), 23-24; George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2nd edn, 2005), 35; the introduction to Tobit in the *Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* (ed. Bruce M. Metzger; New York: Oxford University Press, 1965=1977), 63.

Narrator and Characters

In the following literary analysis of *Tobit* we limit ourselves to a discussion of the narrator and the characters. Initially, the narrator speaks in the first person through the title character (1.1–3.6). The reader, reading the 'I' of the narrator, identifies with Tobit. In 3.7, the narrator introduces the story of Sarah, and the voice switches to the third person thereafter, even when the story returns to Tobit.[2] This shift may be seen as logically necessary, for the character Tobit is not in the position of the omniscient narrator. However, the shift is more than a conventional nicety; it serves to distance the reader. Now reading 'he' instead of 'I', the reader no longer identifies as closely with the character Tobit. Moreover, the third-person narrative implies throughout the narrator's presence as omniscient observer.

Directly or indirectly the narrator reveals the characters by having them speak or act, and by having other characters react to them.[3] In a well-told story like *Tobit*, where characters are 'living' or developed (as opposed to 'cardboard' or underdeveloped), the reader can evaluate them as one would evaluate a real person. The characters appear to 'come to life', so that the reader learns who they 'are', or what personal qualities or traits they have.[4] In *Tobit*, the narrator provides a substantial amount of information about the title character: his faith that God rewards righteousness; his generosity; his despair at being blinded. On the other hand, the primary actor is Tobias, who takes a journey with an angel and marries into a wealthy family, but the reader learns little about his personal traits. The most fully developed female character is Anna, whose words and actions suggest a fully formed personality. Sarah's prayer (3.10-15) reveals her grief, her concern for her father and her trust in God, but after this initial characterization she does little and speaks less (one other word, 8.8). The text offers, in comparison with the depictions of Tobit and Anna, less about Sarah's parents both as individuals and in terms of their spousal relationship. We are told simply that Raguel and Edna treat guests well, are sympathetic to Tobit's blindness and are concerned for their daughter's welfare.

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[2] Cf. 1QapGen, where the narrator also shifts from first person (Abraham) to third. For a detailed discussion see Irene Nowell, 'The Narrator in the Book of Tobit', in *SBLSP 1988 Seminar Papers* (ed. David J. Lull; Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1988), 27-38.

[3] David Rhoads and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative World of a Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 101.

[4] Rhoads and Michie, *Mark*, 101-103.

Religious Life

Under the rubric of religious life, we include such motifs as prayer, ritual duties or duties prescribed by the Israelite Law, and interaction with supernatural beings. Although women within the text also participate in some aspects of the religious sphere, in the story world of *Tobit* it is principally males who inhabit this realm.

Prayer

All of the main characters address God directly in prayer or evoke the deity's name in some fashion. Tobias prays with his new wife after the demon has been banished (8.4-8); Edna invokes God in blessings (8.18 [Gk. 17]; 10.12), as do Raguel (8.15-17) and Tobit (11.14, 17); in ch. 13 Tobit utters a lengthy poetic blessing. And even Anna appeals to the Lord indirectly in her rebuke of Tobit (5.19). It is the prayers of Tobit and Sarah, however, that are the most carefully constructed. Set in parallel to one another, they function as literary pivots for the plot.

The characters address a double problem in their prayers which the angel Raphael ultimately will resolve. In turn, this resolution will unite the two families through marriage.[5] Both prayers are preceded by a description of the situation which prompts the characters to seek divine aid: Tobit's piety, his blindness and his reproach by another; Sarah's (presumed) innocence, the demon, and her reproach by others.[6] The prayers are, further, similar in structure and vocabulary. Deep grief (περίλυπος, ἐλυπήθε, λύπη) prompts both Tobit and Sarah to pray. Both begin their prayers with the formulaic 'Righteous [so Tobit]/Blessed [so Sarah] are you, O Lord'. Both mention having heard reproach (ὀνειδισμός), and they ask to 'be released' (ἀπολυθῆναι), since dying seems to be the only solution to their problems. Both speak of sin (ἁμαρτία, ἀκαθαρσία) and captivity (αἰχμαλωσία).

Thematically, however, the differences between the prayers point to a distinction in the religious roles of Tobit and Sarah. A patriarchal worldview is upheld in that the male character, Tobit, is paradigmatic of Israel. He mentions divine judgment and speaks of 'my sins and those of my fathers', which are responsible for the people's present state of exile. Sarah, the woman, is paradigmatic neither

[5] Or, as Nickelsburg puts it (*Jewish Literature*, 30), the situations of Tobit and Sarah are two plots resolved by a third: Raphael's mission.

[6] Nickelsburg (*Jewish Literature*, 30), notes the 'close literary symmetry' and places these elements in parallel columns.

for Israel nor even for other women in her situation;[7] her prayer concerns only her own personal dilemma. In contrast to Tobit's 'my fathers', Sarah speaks only of 'my father'.

Yet there is a twist to this patriarchal presentation. The tones of the prayers reveal Sarah as the more admirable character of the two. Although Tobit uses all the 'right' (i.e., conventional) phrases, the tone of his prayer is self-centered and whining. Tobit presumptuously assumes that his desire to die is also divine will: 'Deal with me according to your pleasure (κατὰ τὸ ἀρεστόν); command my spirit to be taken up' (3.6). Sarah, who herself also sees death as the only solution, acknowledges that God may not see the situation in the same way; she prays: 'If it is not pleasing (δοκεῖ) to you to take my life', ease my pain another way (3.15). Tobit flatly states that 'it is better for me to die than to live';[8] in other words, he sees only this one option. In contrast, Sarah's prayer is wiser, less self-centered. She has considered suicide but rejects it because she is concerned about her father's feelings and reputation. She asks, 'Why should I live?' This question, combined with what immediately follows, implies the request: 'Give me a reason to live' (which she soon receives). Furthermore, while Tobit admirably gives a 'proper' confession of his sins, Sarah more admirably is 'innocent of any sin with man'.

Another point of difference serves to emphasize the distinction between the ways in which Tobit and Sarah view divine–human interaction. At the end of his prayer, Tobit says, 'Do not turn (μὴ ἀποστρέψῃς) your face away from me' (3.6). At the beginning of her prayer, Sarah says. 'I have turned (ἀνέβλεψα) my eyes and face toward you' (3.12). In Tobit's religious purview, the normal orientation of God's 'face' is toward humanity; humans can turn away from God not only by sinning (which is implied in his previous words), but they can also cause the deity to turn away from them. Tobit repeats this understanding in 13.6. 'If you turn (ἐπιστρέψητε) to him...then he will turn (ἐπιστρέψει) to you and will not hide his face from you'. But the wording in Sarah's prayer assumes God's constant orientation towards humanity. She seems to see the role of the human as that of supplicant: I am in need, so I have turned to you. Sarah's words do not reflect an understanding that her actions can in any way cause a change in the divine relationship to humanity.

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[7] Cf. Jdt. 8.32-34; 9.2-14; 16.2-17.

[8] The words are very similar to what Jonah says in Jon. 4.3, 8. This wish is one of a number of connections between Tobit and Jonah; others include the setting in Nineveh, the fish 'who would have swallowed the young man' (Tob. 6.2), and the mention of the 'prophecies of Jonah' in Tob. 14.

Although a personal tragedy occasions each prayer, only Tobit's recitation goes beyond his particular problem to encompass all Israel. Conversely, Sarah is praying because she has been married seven times and has not managed to produce an heir; in her despair she wants to die. Tobit briefly comments that he has heard false reproaches, but he never mentions his blindness or his impoverishment; in contrast, he goes on and on about Israel's sins and exile.

It is difficult to prove that the differences between these two specific prayers reflect general views about men's and women's piety. We cannot conclude that women stereotypically pray only in response to specific situations of individual concern, while men's prayers would usually include larger issues and other people. Sarah's is the only prayer by a woman in the story. However, on the two occasions in which Edna evokes the deity in blessings, her concerns are particular: to comfort Sarah when she weeps (7.17-18), and to express a wish to see her grandchildren (10.12). In the prayers and blessings of the male characters, even when they concern particular situations, the focus is on others. Raguel expresses joy over the marriage of Sarah and Tobias (8.15-17) and wishes for their prosperity (10.11). When Tobit regains his sight, he blesses God and all the holy angels (11.14-15); when he meets Sarah, he blesses her and her parents (11.17). Tobit's long blessing in ch. 13 does not concern himself at all but concentrates on the nation. While Tobias's prayer (8.4-7), in which Sarah presumably joins although as a silent partner, is specifically oriented toward marriage, he also mentions the entire human race that sprang from Adam and Eve.

Despite the differences, Tobit's and Sarah's prayers of supplication are equally effective. Although neither is answered in the way each expects, God hears both and sends Raphael to heal them (3.16-17). The personal tragedies that prompted them to pray are rectified: Tobit's blindness is cured, and Sarah gets a husband who lives through the night.

Ritual/Prescribed Duties

Charity

The performance of charitable deeds is the responsibility only of the male characters. Twice Tobit indicates his diligence in helping those less fortunate (1.16-17; 2.2). In his first testamentary address to Tobias, he emphasizes the importance of charity and its rewards (4.7-11, 16); in his final testament he again mentions almsgiving (14.11). Raphael similarly reveals to Tobit and Tobias the good that giving alms accomplishes (12.8-9).

The injunction to be charitable applies to both rich and poor, as Tobit announces in his initial testament: those who have few possessions should give 'according to the little you have' (4.8). But such giving is a special responsibility

of propertied men. Despite the fact that Tobit himself has had his property confiscated by the king (1.20), the book as a whole is addressed to the wealthy. Nor is Tobit left fully destitute: he has a considerable sum in trust in Rages (1.4).[9] Raguel is also wealthy, as his bestowing upon his new son-in-law half his property 'in slaves, cattle, and money' (8.21; 10.10) indicates. Tobias inherits the rest when his in-laws die (14.13).

None of the women has any responsibility for performing charitable deeds. In fact, they appear to have no control over family property as long as a male family member is present. Sarah's inheritance clearly belongs to Tobias (6.11-12; 8.21; 14.13). The sole indication that women can retain control over property is Raguel's stipulation that Tobias will receive the remainder of his property only after both he and Edna have died (8.21). The implication is that if a husband dies first, the wife inherits (cf. Jdt. 8.7). Anna outlives Tobit (14.11-12), but Tobias is then living in his parents' home and apparently controls the family possessions; the text says that he inherits the property 'of his father Tobit' (14.13). The women in this story thus have no possessions from which they can give alms.

Burial of the Dead and Mourning

This theme occurs repeatedly throughout *Tobit*. Interring is an extremely important ritual act[10] that supersedes other concerns such as the king's displeasure (1.18) and the celebration of Pentecost (2.1-5). In the text, the act crosses the boundaries between the private and the public spheres. It is a familial duty for Tobias; twice his father tells him to see to the proper burial of himself and Anna (4.3; 14.10).[11] Raguel himself digs a grave for Tobias, in case his latest son-in-law fails to survive the wedding night (8.9). It is also a service that Tobit provides for others, and which does not go unnoticed in heaven. Raphael specifically mentions Tobit's burial of the dead as a reason for his being sent to heal him (12.12-13). Like charity, interring is strictly a male responsibility, perhaps because of its connection to the public world. Or perhaps burial, like giving charity, is a male duty because in this story world there is always a male head of household; we cannot know whether a woman householder would have had a similar responsibility.

For a text so interested in burial of the dead, *Tobit* provides little indication of mourning rituals. Tobit performs some kind of ritual washing after handling a corpse (2.5), and he is then reminded of Amos 8.10: 'Your feasts shall be turned

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[9] At least $10,000, according to the note in the *Oxford Apocrypha*.

[10] See the comments by Nickelsburg in 'Tobit', in *Harper's Bible Commentary* (gen. ed. James L. Mays; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 793; Zimmerman, *Book of Tobit*, 51.

[11] Anna must be buried in the same grave (4.3; 14.10, 12); cf. *Apoc. Mos.* 31.3; 42.4-7.

into mourning'. He does sleep outdoors after an interring (2.9),[12] but he engages in no specific ritual of mourning. Neither Tobias nor Sarah is said to mourn when their parents die; the narrator merely reports the deaths and that funerals were given.

Religious/Ethical Instruction

To educate children in the Law and the correct way to live is primarily a male duty in *Tobit*. Thinking he will soon die, Tobit calls his son and instructs him about keeping the commandments, the importance of charity, proper marriages, and correct behavior (4.5-12); he repeats some of this in his second testament (ch. 14).[13] But here we find another twist in the patriarchal structure. According to 1.8, because his father was dead Tobit's grandmother taught him the Law.[14] In this unusual reference, the narrator informs the reader that women apparently knew the Law, and that in the absence of a male relative performed the duty of providing religious instruction. How and to what extent women might have learned the Law is unclear; there is no indication that Anna, Sarah, or Edna knew the Law.

Endogamy is an injunction that applies to both sexes in the story world of the apocryphon. Tobit marries a member of his family (1.9), and he strongly enjoins Tobias to do the same (4.12-13). Sarah moans in her prayer that there is no relative left for her to marry (3.15), and Raphael informs Tobias that as Sarah's only relative he is entitled to her hand (6.11). This is a view Raguel echoes (7.10, 12). Emphasis placed on endogamy fits the diaspora setting of the story, since it would have been more difficult to find an eligible, non-gentile spouse outside of Israel than it was in Israel before the exile.[15]

Interaction with Supernatural Beings

Contact with the otherworldly lies at the center of the religious content of the text. There are two supernatural beings in *Tobit*: a demon and an angel. One is responsible for the problem that prompts Sarah's prayer; the other rectifies the situations that occasioned the prayer of Tobit as well as that of Sarah. But, not

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[12] See Nickelsburg's comments in *Harper's*, 794; Zimmerman, *Book of Tobit*, 56-57.

[13] Typically, testamentary literature concerns male family members: fathers and sons. For a discussion of the genre and some examples, see Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 301-22.

[14] Cf. *4 Macc.* 15–16, where the mother of the seven martyred brothers encourages them to uphold the Law even if it meant death: she is called 'vindicator of the Law' (15.29).

[15] On the problems of the geographical provenance of Tobit, see G.W.E. Nickelsburg, 'Tobit and Enoch: Distant Cousins with a Recognizable Resemblance', in Lull, ed., *SBLSP*, 68.

surprisingly, the manner in which Asmodeus and Raphael interact with the characters demonstrates the dichotomy in the text's portrayal of men and women.

Only the male characters have 'good' contact with supernatural beings. The angel Raphael freely talks with all the male characters (5.4-16; 7.8-9), instructs Tobit and Tobias (12.6-11), and travels with Tobias (ch. 6). Tobias, instructed by Raphael, performs the ritual that banishes the demon (8.2-3). On the other hand, none of the women interacts in a positive way with these beings. The demon plagues Sarah, but the text does not even indicate that she is aware of Asmodeus's existence. The angel is responsible for Sarah's healing, but he accomplishes this indirectly through Tobias and apparently for Tobias's benefit. Raphael never speaks to the women, and he even appears to go out of his way to avoid prolonged association with Sarah (11.3). In fact, in Tobit's world, the realm of the supernatural is off-limits to women. The one instance of any such interaction involves an evil demon who victimizes a female character. Perhaps the author wanted to avoid the kind of disastrous results of such an association between women and heavenly beings as found in Genesis 6 or 1 *Enoch* 6–11, where the union between heavenly male creatures and beautiful earthly women is followed by increasing wickedness and violence.[16]

To summarize: in the religious world of *Tobit*, the male characters have more freedom and responsibility than their female counterparts. Although women may pray or otherwise call upon the deity, their prayers are particularized to their own situations. The male characters, by contrast, pray on behalf of others. Except for the duty of marrying within one's tribe, which applies equally to both sexes, female characters are only ascribed ritual duties in the absence of a male family member who would normally have had the responsibility. Only the male characters have any direct positive contact with supernatural beings.

Family Life

Tobit portrays family life by presenting interactions among various family members: spouses, parents, children, in-laws. Family members have gender-defined roles in terms of responsibilities and familial obligations, but occasionally exceptions to these roles appear. In general, the female characters have more autonomy in the domestic sphere than they do in the religious realm; the male characters conversely play a role in both spheres.

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[16] Cf. Nickelsburg, 'Tobit and Enoch', 57-58.

Spouses

Of the couple that gets married during the course of the story, the male partner makes the arrangements for the marriage himself while his fiancée has no say regarding wedding preparations. Although Tobit is concerned that his son have a proper marriage, he has nothing do to with the wedding itself and indeed learns of it only after the fact. Tobias, at the urging of Azarias, a person he has only just met, conducts the deal with Sarah's father. Like a piece of property, Sarah is given to Tobias (7.13), just as Raguel gave her to her seven previous husbands (7.11).[17]

The story also contains an element of heavenly matchmaking which is described as a benefit only for the male partner. It is an angel who suggests to Tobias that he marry Sarah (6.10). When the youth expresses his fear that Sarah's demon will kill him too, the angel informs him that 'she was destined for you from eternity' (6.16 [Gk. 18]). This wording demonstrates that the story is being told from an androcentric viewpoint: the angel does not say to Tobias, 'You are destined for her'. The recipient of divine favor is the groom, not the bride. Once again, she is object; he is subject. Even heaven here regards Sarah as a commodity.

Such heavenly matchmaking suggests a belief in a provident God who arranges matters in human affairs, and indeed this theme underlies the entire book.[18] Biblical marriages often contain the same element: in Gen. 24.14, Abraham's servant prays to find 'the one whom [God] has appointed for thy servant Isaac'; in *Ruth*, where the direction of events according to divine purpose is implicit throughout, a marriage occurs which works for the good of all concerned.[19] In *Tobit*, where female characters have no direct contact with angels, it is only the male character, Tobias, who learns that his spouse has been pre-selected by heaven.

These divisions between men and women most often break down once the marriage has taken place: in the interaction between husbands and wives. The conversations and arguments of the pairs, especially those of Tobit and Anna, indicate a potential equalizing of gender-determined roles. Anna is the least passive of the female characters; she is not the kind of wife who is controlled by her husband. Tobit and Anna have four conversations in the story, and in three

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[17] Arrangement by the bride's father is biblical, according to Louis M. Epstein, *The Jewish Marriage Contract: A Study in the Status of the* Woman *in Jewish Law* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1927), 231. But cf. Gen. 24.58, where Rebekah is given the option of saying no; compare as well Jdt. 16.22 and *Asen.* 4.5.2.

[18] Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 30-35.

[19] Including all Israel, since the son born to Ruth and Boaz became David's grandfather (Ruth 4.22).

of these the wife rebukes the husband. After Tobit is blinded, Anna becomes the wage earner and engages in 'women's work' outside the home (2.11-14).[20] Her job provides the setting for their first interaction as well as her first rebuke. Anna has received a kid as a bonus from her employers, and Tobit unjustly accuses her of stealing it. Anna's reply is eloquently direct: 'Now we can see what you are'.[21]

Such a negative presentation of Tobit and positive depiction of Anna tend to equalize their positions and offset the prevailing patriarchal social structure. The narrator is silent about Tobit's motivation for the accusation.[22] To this point, the character has been described only in terms of his exemplary righteousness. It is curious, then, that in his first reaction Tobit immediately assumes that the kid is stolen, and in his second he refuses to believe Anna's explanation. Perhaps the narrator is reformulating the initial description of Tobit's personal piety to indicate a hint of self-righteousness. An alternative but not mutually exclusive interpretation would see this relationship as paralleling the earlier interaction between Sennacherib and Tobit; in both cases, the stronger unjustly oppresses the weaker.[23]

Anna's other rebukes to Tobit also serve to equalize her position in relation to her husband. In their second conversation (5.17-19), Anna in effect tells her husband to straighten his priorities: their son is more important than money. Tobit temporarily quiets his wife's fears: at least, she stops weeping. But when the narrative next returns to the couple (10.1-7), her fears resurface. Her third rebuke to Tobit — 'Be still and stop deceiving me!' (10.17) — suggests that Anna thinks her husband is lying to her or that she does not want him to dismiss her fears so lightly. The narrator has already noted that Tobit is also worried: the implication of Anna's words is thus at the very least the desire that she not be shut out from her husband's concern over their son.

Despite the rebukes, the narrator gives the impression that the couple care for each other. As soon as Anna sees Tobias returning, she shares the good news with her blind husband (11.6). Tobit seems to be genuinely trying to comfort his wife about their son's safety in 5.20-21. However, he may simply want her to shut up, as his considerably shorter response to her weeping in 10.6 suggests: 'Be still and stop worrying: he is well'. In his first testamentary address, Tobit

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[20] The texts vary considerably in this section. Zimmerman assumes Anna did some type of weaving (*Book of Tobit*, 59).

[21] In recension S; B has: 'You seem to know everything!' See Nickelsburg, *Harper's*, 794-95.

[22] Cf. Robert Alter on ambiguity in characterization: *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 22, 33, 117-18, 126. Alter notes that 'the initial words spoken by a personage...[constitute] an important moment in the exposition of character' (74), and that the biblical writers stipulate or suppress 'motive in order to elicit moral inferences and suggest certain ambiguities' (44).

[23] Suggested by A.-J. Levine in correspondence.

urges his son to take care of Anna after she is widowed (4.3-4). However, in all the instruction that follows, including admonitions to treat the poor and employees well, Tobit says nothing about how a man should treat his wife. In other words, Tobit tells Tobias, 'be good to your mother, also to employees and unfortunate strangers', but he omits 'be good to your wife.'

In comparison to Anna and Tobit, who act individually, Edna and Raguel act together as a couple: both greet guests and make them welcome (7.8); they (and also Sarah) weep at hearing of Tobit's misfortune (7.7-8). Both deliver separate farewell addresses to the newlyweds when the latter leave for Nineveh (10.11-12). These examples present less a demonstration of teamwork, however, than an indication of Edna's lack of autonomy.

Contrasted with Anna-as-wife, Edna's role in the domestic sphere is more subservient. On two occasions (7.16; 8.12), Raguel tells Edna to do something, and she complies. Unlike Anna and Tobit, Edna and Raguel are never in conflict with each other. In their interaction, Raguel remarks to his wife about Tobias's resemblance to his relative Tobit (7.2). The mildness of this initial exchange stands in sharp contrast to the first interaction between Anna and Tobit.

Edna does have some limited functions as the 'woman of the house', but on the whole her role is subordinate to that of her husband. Indeed, her character is hardly definable outside her relationship with Raguel. Although the narrator in ch. 3 and the angel in ch. 6 have already mentioned Raguel, the reader encounters Edna only when Tobias and Raphael arrive at their house, subsequently only in conjunction with Raguel. Edna may function as a witness to the marriage contract (or she may merely fetch the scroll[24]), but she takes no part in the negotiations with Tobias; Raguel calls her only after he has given Sarah to her new fiancé (7.12-14). Edna apparently does have authority over the household servants. The maids belong to Raguel (3.7), but it is Edna — albeit at her husband's request — who sends a maid to check on Tobias (8.12). This authority over servants seems not to extend to the other woman in the family, as one might judge from the maids' behavior toward Sarah (3.7-9).

Sarah's primary function in the story is to provide a wife for Tobias. Once she is wed, her role is diminished. She speaks only one more word (8.8), and she is mentioned by name on only three other occasions (10.10-12; 11.17; 12.12-14). It is therefore difficult to describe the couple's relationship. In terms of the plot, it is not their interaction that is important, but their marriage; the wedding resolves the two conflicts: Tobias finds a suitable wife, and Sarah finds a suitable

[24] S: 'He called his wife and said, "Fetch a scroll". And he wrote a marriage agreement on the scroll'. B: 'He called Edna his wife, and taking a scroll he wrote an agreement, and they set their seals to it'.

husband. What we do sense is that Tobias dictates the contours of their relationship.[25] Having fallen in love with her sight unseen (6.17), he determines to marry her. (Perhaps he is partially motivated by the inheritance to which Raphael has twice told him he is entitled.) Tobias arranges the marriage with Raguel: Sarah is not asked her opinion about the union (7.8-13). He tells her to pray with him after he vanquishes the demon (8.4). And in his prayer he indicates what their relationship is to be: she will be a helper like Eve was to Adam (8.5-7). Tobias has added 'and support' to Eve's role as helper, which may mean that he would expect her to earn money if he were to become disabled, like his mother did for his father. Overall, Sarah-as-wife is a completely passive character, as she was the passive victim of the male demon.

Nevertheless, Tobias does seem to care about this woman he has just met and married, and he does express the touching wish that they grow old together (8.7). He also remarks in his prayer, in a bit of a *non sequitur*, that he is not taking Sarah 'out of lust' (8.7). This reference, which may stand as a contrast to Asmodeus's sexual desires, assures that Tobias's motives are pure. Further, twice he calls his new wife 'sister' (8.4, 7; cf. 5.20 and 7.16, where Tobit and Raguel address their wives similarly).

There may be in this address an implied comparison to Abraham's wife Sarah, whom he also called his sister (Gen. 12.11-19). The name Sarah in *Tobit* recalls the biblical matriarch: there are other parallels as well between the two women. Childlessness creates a personal problem for each, although only with Abraham's wife is the problem attributed to barrenness (Gen. 16.1-2). Both Sarahs have confrontations with maids: Hagar 'looked with contempt on her mistress' (Gen. 16.4), and 'Sarai dealt harshly with her' (Gen. 16.6). Raguel's maids insult and taunt Sarah, and they accuse her of beating them (Tob. 3.7-9). In this section of *Tobit*, the word 'reproach' is used, and the expression is often employed as a technical term to indicate barrenness (e.g., Gen. 30.23; Lk. 1.25). Raguel's maids do not call Sarah barren, but their reproach is apparently connected to her childless state.

Parents and Children

It would be helpful if we could compare how parents in the narrative would treat children of both sexes in the same family, but Tobias and Sarah lack siblings. Nevertheless, we can determine that certain functions of parents and children appear to be gender-related. In general, the male roles are characterized by duty, while the female roles are relational in orientation.

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[25] A.-J. Levine in correspondence.

Fathers, but not mothers, have obligations toward their sons but not their daughters in the areas of religious instruction and inheritance. If a father is present, it is his duty to teach his son the correct way to live: this duty is manifested in Tobit's testamentary addresses (4.5-21; 14.3-11, cf. 1.8). Sarah receives no similar instruction, except for 10.12.[26] Neither Anna nor Edna instructs her child. Thinking he is going to die soon, Tobit sends his Tobias to Rages because he wants to leave him an inheritance (4.1-2). The matter of an inheritance is also present in Sarah's story (8.20-21), but here the property goes to her husband. This property appears to be a dowry (which replaces the biblical custom of the bride price).

A father's (not a mother's) duty toward his daughter but not his son involves arranging her marriage. Both Tobit and Raguel show substantial interest in their children's prospective spouses. Tobit's concern is evident when he admonishes Tobias to marry the right kind of woman. Anna says nothing about her son's wife either before or after he marries. While Tobit is concerned, only Raguel arranges his child's marriage. Edna does not participate in these arrangements, but at the couple's departure she tells Tobias, 'I am entrusting my daughter to you' (10.12).

The mothers do not show an interest in such practical matters as instruction and property, perhaps because the fathers of Tobias and Sarah are still alive (contrast 1.8). Rather, Sarah's and Edna's relationship to their children is depicted only in emotional terms. Anna weeps when her son leaves (5.17), worries while he is gone (10.4-5), and weeps again when he returns (11.9). Edna comforts her daughter when she is distressed (7.17), expresses a wish to see her grandchildren, and warns Tobias not to grieve her daughter (10.12). This emotional role is shared, along with their interest in practical concerns, by the fathers. Tobit worries over his son's delay (10.1-2), and cries and embraces Tobias when he returns (11.14). Raguel kisses his daughter goodbye when she leaves with her husband (10.12).

As son, Tobias has more responsibilities and more freedom than Sarah the daughter. A respectful and obedient attitude is one such responsibility. Tobit tells his son to respect his mother because of the danger she faced while pregnant: 'Honor her all the days of your life; do what is pleasing to her, and do not grieve her' (4.3-4).[27] Tobias respectfully obeys his father and does whatever Tobit asks of him (2.2-3; 5.1, 3-4). Tobit admonishes his son to 'do what is pleasing' to

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[26] See below under *In-Laws*.

[27] Edna uses almost the same words to Tobias: 'Do nothing to grieve [Sarah]' (11.12). Does this mean that wives were owed the same respect as mothers, or is there an implied reference here to the dangers of pregnancy? The text in general is implicitly concerned with producing children (3.9, 15; 4.12; 10.12; 14.3) and perhaps therefore with the biological role of women.

his mother, but there is no instance of Anna telling him to do anything. Whether Tobias would be as obedient to his mother is therefore unknown. Nevertheless, he is concerned for both his parents' feelings (6.14), even more than with his own wedding festivities: he wants to return home so that his parents will no longer be worried (10.7-9).[28]

Tobias is frequently reminded by Tobit of his responsibility for seeing to the proper burial of his parents (4.3-4; 14.10). The question of who would bury Tobit and Anna were Sarah's demon to kill him — not who would care for them while they still lived — is the objection Tobias raises when Raphael proposes that the couple marry (6.14). Sarah apparently has no such responsibility; Tobias gives the funerals for his parents and for hers (14.11-13).

In addition, Tobias has much more freedom of movement than does Sarah. He travels (5.5, 16), interacts with strangers outside the home (2.2; 5.4-8), learns magic healing arts (6.6-8, 16-17), and has what might be termed adventures (6.1-13). Although Sarah does greet strangers at her home (7.1), she does not leave the house until, with her husband, she departs for Nineveh (10.11). Not only thus constrained and dependent, Sarah is primarily characterized in emotional rather than practical terms. Such emotionalism is particularly manifested in her concern for Raguel's feelings. Although she considers hanging herself, she hesitates for fear of disgracing her father or bringing him sorrow in his old age (3.10). Precisely what the disgrace would be is not clear: that he had a child who committed suicide, or that he died without an heir to inherit his property and continue his line (3.15).

Sarah is certainly an obedient daughter: she marries without comment the man her father chooses. Her prayer indicates that she will do what is good for her father (i.e. marry and produce an heir) even if it is not what she wants (she wants to die). And she does marry the man her father chooses, even though the marriage results in a loss for her. That is, she 'loses' her home by going with her husband to his. Tobias, as we have seen, is similarly obedient, but in his case obedience to his father (i.e. going to Rages) results in a gain. Not only does he obtain his inheritance from Tobit, he also finds a wife and acquires half her father's property.

In-Laws

The notion of blessing is a constant theme in the relationship between in-laws. Raguel blesses his daughter and son-in-law immediately after the wedding (7.13) and again when they leave (10.11). Edna also pronounces a blessing to Tobias

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[28] Cf. Gen. 24.56, where Abraham's 'good servant', in a similar situation, says, 'Do not delay me...let me go that I may go to my master'.

upon the departure (10.12), and Tobias blesses Sarah's parents as he begins his journey home (11.1 [Gk. 10.13]). In turn, Tobit blesses Sarah and her parents when he meets his new daughter-in-law (11.17). Only Anna and the passive Sarah, who do not interact at all, fail to bless their new relatives.

As a daughter-in-law, Sarah is brought to live in her husband's home, and her familial affiliation transfers to her husband's parents. In the only instruction she receives from her father, he tells her, 'Honor your father-in-law and your mother-in-law; they are now your parents' (10.12). Tobit calls Sarah 'daughter' when he meets her (11.17): by so doing, he effectively keeps her in a dependent position. In contrast, Edna addresses Tobias as 'dear brother' (10.12), and thus she elevates his position in relation to his in-laws from that of son to that of brother. Tobias is respectful toward his wife's parents, and even though Raguel tells him (only in recension S), 'I am your father and Edna is your mother', his primary allegiance remains with his own parents, to whose home he adamantly insists upon returning (10.7-9).[29] Only after his parents die and he leaves Nineveh, as his father urged, does Tobias return to live with his in-laws (14.11-13).

Conclusions

The story world of *Tobit* portrays a patriarchal system in which gender determines roles played by the characters. Women operate primarily within the domestic sphere. Their concerns are the family (husbands, children, parents) and the home (servants, guests). Occasionally, however, the text evidences a tension between the patriarchal structure and characterization: this tension is most pronounced in the depiction of Anna. She is the only female character who ventures into the public sphere (she works), even if that situation is necessitated by her husband's incapacitation. Within the family, women show varying degrees of autonomy. Again, Anna is the strongest of the three: she speaks her mind and is often in conflict with her husband. Edna is never in conflict with Raguel and seems quite subservient to him, but she does have authority over the servants. Sarah is the most passive of the three. She is victimized by a demon and reproached by the servants: she passes from being controlled by her father to being controlled by her husband.

The male characters operate within a public sphere as well as within the private world of the family. Of the three men, only Raguel is never seen outside the sphere of his home. Aside from familial concerns, the male characters deal with economic matters (inheritances), ritual duties (burial, charity), and law

[29] In his earlier references to Adam and Eve and the role of a wife (8.6), Tobias did not include what Gen. 2.24 adds: 'Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother...'

(instruction of children); they also form relationships with non-family members (Azarias). Within the family, all three male characters direct their wives: Tobit, however, is less successful in eliciting the desired response than the other two.

Matters of religion are largely the prerogative of the male characters. Both men and women pray and have their prayers answered, but the differences in the prayers suggest another twist to the patriarchal system. Tobit, speaker for the exiled nation, prays in a theologically non-native way. In this sense, his prayer is not self-centered. Ironically, however, the tone of his prayer is quite selfish. Sarah's prayer focuses only on herself and her personal problem, but its tone is not self-centered: she is concerned for her father, not for herself. Thus, in light of the two prayers, Sarah emerges as the more admirable of the two characters. The men, however, dominate in the other religious areas. Only the male characters have ritual duties and, unless there is no male householder, only the men provide religious instruction. The men alone interact positively with supernatural beings. Female characters have only a limited function in the religious world of *Tobit*: the religious realm belongs to the men.

To what extent the world described in *Tobit*, set centuries before the author's own time, reflects the real world of the author is difficult to determine. We cannot easily extract which elements belong to the author's world, and which ones the author contrived to reflect his (or her) conception of the time period in which the text is set. It would seem that society in the author's time had a patriarchal structure. But what does one make of the twists in the narrative? Are they pure, wishful fictions, or do they reflect those points at which everyday human relationships can break with societal order? If the latter is the case, it is striking that the author has chosen to cherish these human moments and to weave them into the texture of this narrative.

Chapter 3A

Does the 'Twist' Point to Heterarchy? A Response to Beverly Bow and George Nickelsburg

Athalya Brenner-Idan

Bow and Nickelsburg conclude, after reading *Tobit* for the gender roles and relations reflected in the book, that what we read is a patriarchal narrative 'with a twist': namely, that whereas males' social position, in the public as well as in the domestic sphere, is dominant, certain details point to the significant contribution of women to society in both spheres, albeit from a position of a certain social inferiority. The question arises, then, whether in the twenty-something years since this essay was written, another definition for the social order that seems to inform the book has become more appropriate than 'patriarchy' — at least 'patriarchy' in the narrower sense of an order that restricts women as a group and contains them where they 'belong'.

On the face of it, such a new definition has become more current in recent years, and its applicability to the social situation described in *Tobit* will be briefly examined here. The term used is *heterarchy*, as borrowed from recent studies in anthropology and sociology especially in [biblical] archaeology.

According to Levy (following Crumley), 'structures are heterarchical when each element is either unranked relative to other elements or possesses the *potential* for being ranked in a number of different ways'.[1] In other words, while heterarchy does not exclude hierarchical (linear and vertical, value-laden from the highest rung to the lower) social structures, it makes space for other, criss-crossing and horizontal attitudes. As such, it is a more open and flexible term, or model. In Levy's words again,

> The analytical strategy of heterarchy is relevant to a number of core topics in gender studies in archaeology: division of labor, gender diversity, ranking, social evolution… Heterarchy shares with gender analysis the quality of disruption: disrupting implicit assumptions about human social systems, social complexity, and social change.[2]

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[1] J. E. Levy, 'Gender, Heterarchy and Hierarchy', in *Women in Antiquity: Theoretical Approaches to Gender and Archaeology* (ed. S. Millege Nelson; Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2007), 189-216 (180, emphasis in the original).

[2] Levy, 'Gender, Heterarchy and Hierarchy', 192.

The chief advocate for the term's applicability to biblical literatures, hence to at least certain time–place scopes of biblical societies, is Carol Meyers. Thus, in the conclusion to her 2014 article (which is the adaptation of her presidential address to the SBL that same year), Meyers critiques the relevance of 'patriarchy' for understanding biblical literature and societies:

> I began with a question, Was ancient Israel a patriarchal society?; and my answer is no, ancient Israel should not be called a patriarchal society, for the term 'patriarchy' is an inadequate and misleading designation of the social reality of ancient Israel. I conclude with another question and a brief reply. If the patriarchy model has outlived its usefulness as a social-science model for representing Israelite society, is there another model that can better accommodate the diversity of women's experiences and acknowledge their control of certain household and society-wide functions? Let me suggest a more recent social-science model. Many anthropologists now invoke the concept of heterarchy. This concept, which has been productively employed by gender archaeologists among others, concedes the existence of hierarchies but does not situate them all in a linear pattern. Rather it acknowledges that different power structures can exist simultaneously in any given society, with each structure having its own hierarchical arrangements that may cross-cut each other laterally. As a far more flexible model than patriarchy, heterarchy is a heuristic tool that perhaps can better accommodate, at least for now, the complexity of gender dynamics and thereby acknowledge that Israelite women were not dominated in all aspects of Israelite society but rather were autonomous actors in multiple aspects of household and community life.[3]

On the face of it, the call to greater sophistication and more openness which the use of the term 'heterarchy' enables for analyzing gender roles in biblical literature in general, and in the 'twists' of *Tobit* in particular, is enticing. The gains are considerable. With the aid of archaeology and anthropo-sociology, significance is granted to 'stereotyped' female activities and behavior. On the interpretation side, deviations from such stereotypes are easily explainable not as plot 'twists' or circumstantial necessities, but as nuggets of reality that might have entered the male-oriented ideology naturally, since they reflect a multi-hierarchical situation rather than a male–female top-down on all life fronts. Furthermore, by not insisting on an inflexible 'patriarchy' female dominance — when it is narrated — will be seen as evidence for female actual (or potential) social standing rather than an anomaly. The empowerment this model affords to female readers or their sympathizers is of course considerable.

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[3] Carol L. Meyers, 'Was Ancient Israel a Patriarchal Society', *JBL* 133.1 (2014), 8-27 (27). In addition to the sources cited by Meyers in the aforementioned article, see also her *Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 180-202, esp. 196-202.

So far so good. However, 'heterarchy' still implies hierarchies, and not only horizontal ones. It recognizes difference, does not imply on-balance equality or near equality. Its application to understanding biblical literatures/times instead of 'patriarchy' is so broad, and the term users' tendency to highlight social complexity so strong, that it clouds the issue rather than make it more comprehensible. For, as other contributors to this volume have shown, and quite convincingly, and as Bow and Nickelsburg ultimately concede, whether we drop the term 'patriarchy' as inadequate or not, whether we revaluate women's social and economic contribution in antiquity or not, whether we play with the balance of gendered activities or not, the fact remains: the heroes of *Tobit*, and most of the bible, are males, be they human or divine. Women, as in *Tobit*, are coincidental and more passive, although not unimportant: they are not the heroines.[4] The problem is only partly in the name or in the model chosen, 'patriarchy' or 'heterarchy'. The problem lies in the difficulty to define, without exaggeration this way or the other, how and why women's inferior social status nevertheless did not mean total group suppression or exclusion from public life and control of economic resources. While the 'heterarchy' model goes a certain distance toward opening up this problem of interpretation, a wholesale substitution of the 'patriarchy' model for this newer one will only cloud the issue. Care and nuance are in order, not only a change of terminology or model.

So is *Tobit* a patriarchal book with a twist? If 'patriarchal' is synonymous for 'male dominated' then the story is certainly top-down hierarchical and 'patriarchal'. If the 'twist' or 'twists' are taken as deep-level 'signs', then they point to heterarchical structures.

Let me close with McCafferty's concluding words, applicable to his own studies on Mezzo-America as well as to biblical studies:

> In conclusion, there has been considerable activity in terms of interpreting women's roles in the complexification of society over the past 20 years. Western stereotypes of male dominance have been identified and challenged. Archaeological case studies serve to demonstrate differences from the culturally prescribed roles, opening up possibilities for imagining change by revealing the transparency of the status quo. As the weight of evidence builds, it is hoped that more middle-range scholars will take notice and the message will be passed on within the discipline and, especially, to students...[5]

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[4] And so in most of biblical literature; heroine stories are important, at times crucial (see for instance Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve*, 180-96), but a minority storyline. Even if we surmise that more such stories were in circulation, but forgotten or suppressed, this would buttress the notion of male-top social hierarchy, be it named 'patriarchy' or otherwise.

[5] G.G. McCafferty, 'Hierarchy, Heterarchy and the Role of Women in Social Complexification', in *Que(e)rying Archaeology: Proceedings of the Thirty-Seventh Annual Chacmool Conference, University of Calgary* (ed. Susan Terendy *et al.*; Calgary: Archaeological Association, University of Calgary Press, 2009), 21-28 (27).

Chapter 4

The Banishment of the Demon in *Tobit*: Textual Variants as a Result of Enculturation*

Beate Ego

Recent text-critical research on *Tobit* has predominantly led to insights into the priority of the longer version of the story, which is represented mainly by Codex Sinaiticus.[1] In that research, however, little concern has been shown for noting the theological contents and specific tendencies of the different recensions, which become apparent in the reworked, longer version.[2] Nor has there been consideration of the Hellenistic setting of the recensions. In order to contribute to this wider field of inquiry into *Tobit*, I will first give in this essay an overview of recent insights into the mutual relationships between the recensions of *Tobit*. Using this as a background I will then try to elucidate one of the units of variation found in the recensions, and I will consider the religious and cultural framework of the variant, namely the banishment of a demon.

Textual Criticism of *Tobit*: The Priority of Codex Sinaiticus

Discoveries in the Judean desert manuscripts have thrown new light on *Tobit*. In the Greek there are two different recensions: a shorter text represented by

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[1] Concerning other recent topics regarding research on *Tobit*, cf. Richard A. Spencer, 'The Book of Tobit in Recent Research', *CRBS* 7 (1999), 147-80.

[2] For a list of differences that are interesting from a text-critical point of view, cf. Robert Hanhart, *Text und Textgeschichte des Buches Tobit* (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, 139; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 23-34. However, the existence of differing contents in the versions was stressed recently by Loren Stuckenbruck, 'The Book of Tobit and the Problem of "Magic"', in *Jüdische Schriften in ihrem antik-jüdischen und urchristlichen Kontext* (ed. H. Lichtenberger and G.S. Oegema; Studien zu den Jüdischen Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit, 1; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2002), 258-69.

Vaticanus and Alexandrinus (GI), and a longer text represented by Sinaiticus (GII). With Tischendorf's discovery of the longer text of Tobit in St. Catherine's Monastery in 1844, scholarly debate raged over questions such as: What is the relationship between these two Greek texts? Does a Greek original exist, or are these texts translations? If translations, what was the original language of the text?

During the nineteenth century a number of scholars argued that the longer recension of the book was a reworking of the shorter one, and even until the end of the twentieth century there were scholars like Paul Deselaers, Heinrich Gross, and Bernd Kollmann who favored the shorter version of the text.[3] This text-critical decision was based on the assumption that a text was more likely to be expanded through additions than shortened through deletions. On the other hand, there currently is an increasing tendency to regard the shorter as the secondary recension. This means that the longer text was reworked and shortened in order to avoid redundancies and to concentrate on the plot of the narrative. This view is actually supported by the Qumran manuscripts of Cave 4. The fragments of five different manuscripts — four in Aramaic and one in Hebrew — not only furnished sufficient evidence of the existence of a Semitic original but also gave crucial evidence concerning the relationship of the two Greek recensions. In 1966 J.T. Milik listed the verses that were preserved in each of the five manuscripts and stated that the text of these Qumran fragments agrees with Sinaiticus.[4] For this reason he concluded that the recension represented by Sinaiticus is closer to the Semitic original than the shorter texts of Vaticanus and Alexandrinus.[5]

Further evidence for this conclusion was provided in Joseph Fitzmyer's official publication of these fragments in the series Discoveries in the Judean Dessert (DJD) in 1995. After nearly four decades of waiting scholars saw with their own eyes that with very few exceptions the Qumran fragments most resembled the text of Sinaiticus.[6] For this reason, recent contributions, such as

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[3] Paul Deselaers, *Das Buch Tobit: Studien zu seiner Entstehung, Komposition und Theologie* (OBO, 43; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982); Heinrich Gross, *Tobit, Judit* (Neue Echter Bibel, Kommentar zum Alten Testament, 19; Würzburg: Echter, 1987); Bernd Kollmann, 'Göttliche Offenbarung magisch-pharmakologischer Heilkunst im Buch Tobit', *ZAW* 106 (1994), 289-99, esp. 290 n. 5.

[4] Cf. Joseph T. Milik, 'Le Patrie De Tobie', *RB* 73 (1966), 522-30 (522): '...la recension longue (Sinaiticus et Vetus Latina), la plus proche de original sémitique dont plusieurs fragments on été identifiés parmi les manuscrits de la Grotte 4 de Qumrân...'

[5] Concerning the whole issue of the *Textgeschichte*, cf. Carey A. Moore, 'Scholarly Issues in the Book of Tobit before Qumran and after: An Assessment', *JSP* 5 (1989), 65-81; see also Beate Ego, 'Buch Tobit', in *Unterweisung in erzählender Form* (JSHRZ, 2.6; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999), 875, both with references to earlier literature.

[6] Cf. Carey A. Moore, *Tobit: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 40A; New York: Doubleday, 1996), 1-76 (4): 'Although the Aramaic form of Tobit from

the commentaries by Carey Moore and Helen Schüngel-Straumann, and Armin Schmitt's article on the Hebrew *Tobit* fragments, are based on the preference for Sinaiticus.[7] There are, however, slight differences between the Qumran fragments and Sinaiticus, and thus the text of Sinaiticus is not identical with the Greek original, i.e. the translation of the Semitic *Vorlage*.[8]

Different Concepts Relating to the Banishment of Demons in the Manuscripts and Recensions

As a contribution to the study of the differences between the two recensions and of the possible influences of the Hellenistic setting on the Greek recensions, we will focus on the motif of the banishment of the wicked demon Asmodeus.[9] This demon was responsible for killing seven bridegrooms of Sarah during their respective wedding nights. Finally God sent the angel Raphael, who succeeded in expelling this wicked creature.

At Tob. 3.17 we find a difference in the concept of what Raphael did. On the one hand we read in Sinaiticus:

> And Rafael was sent to cure them both: Tobit, by removing the white patches from his eyes so that he might see God's light again, and Sarah, daughter of Raguel by giving her for a wife to Tobias son of Tobit and by setting free (λῦσαι) the wicked demon Asmodaeus from her.[10]

Qumran frequently agrees with the long recension of S and La, neither the Greek nor the Latin is a direct translation of such an Aramaic *Vorlage*; the latter contains inverted phrases, expanded expressions, and words not rightly understood by either the Greek or Latin translator of these versions'. Examples for cases where GII agrees with the Qumran texts are given by Moore, *Tobit*, 57.

[7] Moore, *Tobit*, 56; Helen Schüngel-Straumann, *Tobit* (HThK.AT; Freiburg: Herder, 2000); and Armin Schmitt, 'Die Hebräischen Textfunde zum Buch Tobit aus Qumran 4QTob^{e} (4Q200)', *ZAW* 113 (2001), 566-82. Cf. also Stuckenbruck, 'Tobit and the Problem of "Magic"'.

[8] Concerning the question whether the original language of *Tobit* was Hebrew or Aramaic, cf. Ego, 'Buch Tobit', 880, and the additional literature listed there.

[9] It is very likely that the Aramaic or Hebrew name of the demon 'Ashmodai' traces back to the Avestic demon of wrath called 'aeshma daeuua'. This demon represents one of the most important negative powers among the dualisms of Zoroastrianism. Concerning this etymological proposal cf. Deselaers, *Das Buch Tobit*, 87; Manfred Hutter, 'Asmodeus', in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (ed. K. van der Toorn *et al.*; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 106-108; Esther Eshel, 'Ha-Emunah be-Shedim be-Erets-Yisra'el Bi-Yeme Ha-Bayit Ha-Sheni [Demonology in Palestine during the Second Temple Period]' (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 1999), 154; Gregor Ahn, 'Dualismen im Konzept von Gegenweltsvorstellungen: Von zoroastrischen Gegengottkonzepten zu jüdischen Satansfiguren', in *Die Dämonen: Die Dämonologie der israelitisch-jüdischen und frühchristlichen Literatur im Kontext ihrer Umwelt* (ed. A. Lange, D. Römheld, and H. Lichtenberger; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 122-36 (126 and 131-32).

[10] This translation is based on the NEB; slight changes were made to give a more literal translation.

On the other hand, in the parallel verse in Alexandrinus and Vaticanus we read: 'And Raphael was sent...to bind (δῆσαι) the wicked demon Asmodeus' (3.17).

Actually, the concept of the binding of the demon is found in both recensions, because in Tob. 8.3 of Sinaiticus it is stated:

> When they had finished eating and drinking and were ready for bed, they escorted the young man to the bridal chamber. Tobias recalled what Raphael had told him; he took the fish's liver and heart out of the bag in which he kept them, and put them on the smoking incense. The smell from the fish held the demon off, and he took flight into Upper Egypt; and Raphael instantly followed him there and bound him hand and foot.[11]

It is worth elucidating here the different ideas that underlie the terminology describing the banishment of the demon. At first sight the term λύω, which is used in Sinaiticus, seems to be very unspecific. In the Greek magical papyri it is often used of sending away a helping and graceful deity, after being called by its 'client' in order to give a particular charm or oracle.[12]

However, when trying to understand the semantic connotations of the word λύω in the context of *Tobit*, it is an assumption that this term is an equivalent of the Aramaic word פטר.[13] The term פטר in Babylonian Judaism served as *terminus technicus* in the sense of 'to divorce' (e.g. *b. Giṭ.* 65b). It is also significant that in Greek λύω was used with the connotation of divorce (e.g. Mt. 5.31-32; 1 Cor. 7.10-11). It should be stressed, however, that especially in Aramaic and Mandaic magical texts, the term פטר was also used of the expulsion of demons. Thus, it is possible to imply that demons were regarded as being associated with their victims in a manner resembling marriage and therefore had to be divorced.[14] This idea is clearly mentioned, for example, in one of the incantation texts published by Yamauchi. Here the banishing or 'divorcing' of the demon is explicitly connected with the writing of a bill of divorce.

> [8] This I have written against you, Haldas the lilith, and thus [9] have I banished (אפתרתיך) you from the house and the body of Hormiz the son of Mahlapta, and from his wife Ahata [10] the daughter of Dade, and from his sons and daughters, as the demons write a bill of divorce (גיטא) for their wives [11] in truth, and may not return again and may not ... Behold! Take your bill of divorce (גיטך) and receive

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[11] Quoted according the translation of the NEB.

[12] Cf. for example, *PGM* I. #1, lines 35, 170; #2, line 176; #3, lines 195, 260; #4, lines 232, 250, 916, 1057-58, 1066; #5, line 41; II. #7, lines 10, 11, 15.

[13] Cf. Paul-Eugène Dion, 'Rafaël l'Exorcist', *Bib* 57 (1976), 399-413 (406).

[14] Concerning the idea that demons chose men as spouses, cf. Daniel Schwemer, *Akkadische Rituale aus Hattuša: Die Sammeltafel K Bo XXXVI 29 und verwandte Fragmente* (Texte der Hethiter, 23; Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1998), 60: 'He should not go out upon the roof, otherwise he will be chosen as groom for the girl of the wind' (*KAR* 177, Rs. III 25-26); cf. also the female demon Lilith; see Gershom Scholem, 'Lilith', in *EncJud*, 11:245-49.

> your oath, Haldas. [12] O Haldas the lilith, flee, depart, escape, and remove yourself from the house, the dwelling, the mansion [13] and building, from the bed and pillow of Hormiz the son of Mahlapta, and from his wife Ahata [14] the daughter of Dade, and from their sons and their daughters and from their beds and pillows, and do not [15] show yourselves, neither in their dreams of the night nor in their visions of the day. Because bound and sealed is the house, the dwelling, the mansion, and the building of Hormiz... [22] ...This bill of divorce stands confirmed for eternity (שריר וקאים גיטא הדן). On this bowl this lilith is bound (אסירא) [23] and removed (מרחקא) from the house of Hormiz the son of Mahlapta...[15]

The concept of divorcing a demon is already attested in Babylonian ritual texts such as *KAR* 66, in which the demon is associated with a doll-like figure that represents him. First, the possessed and sick person, through words of exorcism, is 'married' to the demon of sickness that is plaguing him. Once married the exorcist — using the demon doll — carries out on the sick person the action of a husband divorcing himself from his wife. This he does by cutting through the hem of the sick person's gown, thus separating it into two parts. In order to render the demon permanently harmless the exorcist marries it, as it were, to a pig.[16]

Since the Greek word λύω has a broad semantic field, there may be doubt about whether this expression really is used in our example with the sense of Asmodeus being divorced from Sarah. However, the description of the relationship between Asmodeus and Sarah in 4QTobit[a] ar (4Q196) VI 15 (Frg. 14 i.4) would seem to support the association:

> דחל אנה מן שדא דן די רחם לה
>
> [I am afraid of this demon] which is [in lo]ve with her[17]

This reconstruction is based on the Greek Tob. 6.15 in MS 319, where the following words can be found: καὶ νῦν φοβοῦμαι ἐγὼ ἀπὸ τοῦ δαιμονίου τούτου ὅτι φίλει αὐτήν, 'And now, I am afraid of this demon, since he is in love with her'.[18] Thus it is evident that even the original Greek translation of *Tobit*

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[15] Quoted according to Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Mandaic Incantation Texts* (AOS, 49; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1967); further evidence is to be found in Dion, 'Rafaël l'Exorcist', 406 n. 40; see also John G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 230-31.

[16] Cf. Schwemer, *Akkadische Rituale aus Hattuša*, 59-67. Cf. Mk 5.9-13 and parallels.

[17] See also 4QTobit[b] ar (4Q197) VI 15 (Frg. 4 ii.10); however, in this text, the term רחם is restored by Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 'Tobit', in *Qumran Cave 4, XIV: Parabiblical Texts, Part 2* (ed. M. Broshi *et al.*; DJD, 19; Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 47; cf. also Eshel, 'Ha-Emunah be-shedim be-Erets-Yisra'el', 156.

[18] Cf. the group of minuscles d and Vetus Latina: 'et nunc timeo hoc daemonium, quoniam diligit illam'. Concerning MS 319, see Robert Hanhart, *Tobit* (Septuaginta, 8.5; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 13; Hanhart, *Text und Textgeschichte des Buches Tobit*, 17.

contained this concept of Asmodeus's love for Sarah. Although we do not find this idea in Sinaiticus, it is found in both Alexandrinus and Vaticanus.[19]

Thus, the evil Asmodeus might be characterized as a so-called 'incubus', i.e. a demon that longs to have sexual contact with its 'victim' and for this reason tries to keep at bay any other lovers of its beloved.

The binding of the demon referred to in the shorter recension at Tob. 3.17, and at Tob. 8.13 in both recensions, represents a different and separate concept from the divorcing. This is, however, also attested in Aramaic and Mandaic incantation texts as well as in the Ethiopic *1 En.* 10.4-7.[20] Here, as in the story of *Tobit*, the angel Raphael has to act in order to expel demons, since the Lord says to him:

> 'Bind Azaz'el hand and foot (and) throw him into the darkness!' And he made a hole in the desert which was in Duda'el and cast him there; he threw on top of him rugged and sharp rocks. And he covered his face in order that he may not see light; and in order that he may be sent into the fire on the great day of judgement. And give life to the earth which the angels have corrupted...[21]

A similar concept is also found in the Greek magical papyri. There, in K. Preisendanz's edition, we find the following example: ἔξελτέ δαῖμον ἐπεί σε δεσμεύω δεσμοῖς ἀδαμαντίνοις ἀλύτοις, 'come out you demon, since I bind you with bonds of steel that cannot be loosed'.[22]

The idea behind the binding of the demon seems to be obvious: After being expelled, such as through the smell of the fish's liver and heart being put on the incense, the binding prevents the demon from returning to its host.[23]

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[19] In the shorter version we find a similar idea voiced: 'And now I am the only son of my father, and I am afraid, lest, if I go in unto her, I die, as the others before: for a wicked demon loveth her, which hurts no one except those which come unto her.' (Translation is based on Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English* [London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1851; repr. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980].)

[20] In the Aramaic and Mandaic incantation texts the word ארס functions as a technical term for the overpowering of a demon; cf. Dion, 'Rafaël l'Exorcist', 408-409, with reference to earlier literature; see also Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1993), *s.v.* ארסא/ארס (ca. 25 examples); Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells*, 226-32.

[21] Quoted according to Ephraim Isaac, '1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch: A New Translation and Introduction', in *OTP*, 1:5-89 (17).

[22] *PGM* I. #4, lines 1244ff.; see also Kollmann, 'Göttliche Offenbarung magisch-pharmakologischer Heilkunst', 298 n. 26. Further examples are to be found in Bianca Schnupp, 'Rafael im Tobitbuch: Eine kulturhermeneutische und theologische Studie zur Schutzengelvorstellung' (Ph.D. diss., Erlangen-Nürnberg, 2002), 76.

[23] Evidence for a fish's liver and heart being put on the incense as a widespread method in Egyptian and Hellenistic sources is given by Kollmann, 'Göttliche Offenbarung magisch-pharmakologischer Heilkunst', 292-93.

Conclusion

In summing up, concerning the relationship between Sarah and Asmodeus and concerning the banishment of the demon, we find in the manuscripts the following differences:

	Tob. 3.17	*Tob. 6.15*	*Tob. 8.3*
MS 319	λύω	ὅτι φιλεῖ αὐτήν	δέω
Sinaiticus	λύω	–	δέω
Alexandrinus, Vaticanus	δέω	ὅτι φιλεῖ αὐτήν	δέω

Having considered the different conceptions of banishment of demons as found in the different manuscripts and recensions, let us now examine the reasons that may have led to the existence of differing conceptions. First, it is necessary to establish that, based on the illustrated relationship between the recensions, the idea of the demon's love for Sarah and its divorce should be regarded as the original concept. This is backed up by the fact that the same concept is also found in MS 319. Through this one may assume the original Greek translation of the story of *Tobit* also contained this concept. In MS 319 we are able to understand that, after the divorcing of Asmodeus from his beloved Sarah, the demon's binding serves as a guarantee that he will be unable to return and do any further harm.[24]

In Sinaiticus as well as in Alexandrinus and Vaticanus this original concept is changed and reduced: On the one hand, in Sinaiticus the motif of the demon's love for Sarah is eliminated, and without it the reader of the story is inclined to understand the term λύω as referring to an evil demon's banishment. On the other hand, the reworking and shortening of the longer version of *Tobit* into the recension GI has changed the motif of the demon's divorce into the demon's binding. It is possible to explain these two cases as a kind of simplifying adaptation of this story. Perhaps we may assume that the copyists or redactors of the Greek original version were not aware of the original connection between the verb λύω and the demon's expulsion.

When we consider the reasons for the phenomenon that differing versions of the banishment of the demon have developed, we can even go one step further by considering the different parallels to the motifs of a demon's expulsion that are found also in Mesopotamian and Greek literature. In this literature it becomes obvious that the whole concept of a demon's love and its divorce, as well as the idea of its binding, was well known in the Eastern world. Particularly

[24] A connection to the demon's divorce and its binding is also attested in the Mandaic incantation bowl text cited (n. 20, above).

in Greek literature, however, only the motif of the demon's binding is well attested, whereas the connection between the love of a demon and its divorce does not seem to play any crucial role at all.[25]

It is now plausible to assume that the erasing of the motif of Asmodeus's love for Sarah in Sinaiticus, as well as the replacement of the term λύω by δέω in Alexandrinus and Vaticanus, was influenced by the cultural and religious setting of those who did the reworking of the different versions and manuscripts. It also seems that the original, probably eastern-Diaspora *Tobit*, with its demonology, was incorporated into the Hellenistic world. With this study of the various versions, recensions, and manuscripts of the story of Sarah and Asmodeus, a window opens for us into a '"conversation" that extended beyond the time of composition into the period during which Tobit was being copied and re-edited'.[26] In light of these arguments it is now possible to say that *Tobit*, which was influenced by concepts found in the eastern Diaspora, also carries traces of the cultural background of the western Diaspora.

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[25] Cf. for example the following basic literature, where this motif is not mentioned: Johanna ter Vrugt-Lenz, 'Geister (Dämonen): B II Vorhellenistisches Griechenland', *RAC*, 9:598-615; Peter Habermehl, 'Dämonen', in *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe* (ed. H. Cancik, B. Gladigow, and M.S. Laubscher; Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1988–2001), 2:203-207; Otto Böcher, 'Dämonen ("Böse Geister") I. Religionsgeschichtlich', *TRE*, 8:270-74; Sarah Iles Johnston, 'Dämonen V. Griechenland und Rom', in *Der Neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike* (ed. H. Cancik and H. Schneider; Stuttgart: Metzler, 1996–), 3:262-64; Peter Habermehl, 'Exorzismus', in Cancik, Gladigow and Laubscher, eds., *Handbuch*, 2:401-404; Jonathan Z. Smith, 'Towards Interpreting Demonic Powers in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity', *ANRW*, 16.1:425-39; Frederick E. Brenk, 'In the Light of the Moon: Demonology in the Early Imperial Period', *ANRW*, 16.3:2069-145.

[26] So a formulation of Stuckenbruck, 'Tobit and the Problem of "Magic"', 269.

Chapter 4a

A Self-Response to 'Textual Variants'

Beate Ego

My essay, which was published in 2006, discusses the two Greek recensions of the *Tobit* story (GI and GII), which contain different concepts about the idea of the banishment of the demon Asmodeus. On the one hand, we read of the binding of the demon by the angel Raphael; on the other hand, the demon gets divorced from his victim by the angel. As I have shown elsewhere in a more elaborate manner, the divorce motif seems to have its background in the ancient Near East, whereas the binding might belong to the ancient Greek world.[1] Both concepts, the divorce and the binding, are linked to the idea that Asmodeus is in love with Sarah. Against this background, the demon's aggressiveness and violence can be understood as an expression of his jealousy and as an attempt to get rid of any competitor for Sarah. Therefore, the demon Asmodeus may be characterized as an *incubus*, i.e. a demon who desires a sexual relationship with his victim.[2] As the title of my essay indicates, it was my goal to demonstrate that, in this case, the different readings in the recensions of the *Tobit* narrative should be understood within their cultural and religious framework. Thus, I wrapped up the essay's thesis by maintaining that GII, the younger and shorter version of the *Tobit* recensions, represents the enculturation of Near Eastern demonology into the Greek world and its culture.

In my opinion, a feminist approach to this issue, and to *Tobit* as a whole, should start by focusing on the relationship between Sarah and the demon, and should try to characterize the figure of Sarah as depicted through this relationship. As already shown, Sarah represents the figure of the 'Killer wife'.[3] Any sexual contact with such a woman can prove deadly. Worse still: a 'Killer wife' is

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[1] Beate Ego, '"Denn er liebt sie" (Tob 6,15 Ms. 319). Zur Rolle des Dämons Asmodäus in der Tobit-Erzählung', in *Die Dämonen — The Demons* (ed. Armin Lange, Hermann Lichtenberger and K.F. Diethard Römheld; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 309-18.

[2] For this idea in general, see Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

[3] Helen Schüngel-Straumann, *Tobit* (Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament; Freiburg: Herder, 2000), 82-86; Tal Ilan, 'Babatha the Killer-Wife: Literature, Folk Religion and Documentary Papyri', in *Law and Narrative in the Bible and in Neighbouring Ancient Cultures* (ed. Klaus-Peter Adam, Friedrich Avemarie and Nili Wazana; FAT II/54; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 263-78.

viewed as being directly responsible for the death of her husband(s). In her commentary on *Tobit*, Helen Schüngel-Straumann refers to the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 as a parallel to Sarah's story in *Tobit*. In her interpretation of the Hebrew Bible story, Schüngel-Straumann stresses that it seems quite obvious that Judah blames Tamar for having caused the death of his sons Er and Onan. However, the very reason that leads to the death of Tamar's husbands is their being wicked in the sight of the LORD (Gen. 38.7, 10).[4] Therefore, we may conclude that the narrator of the Genesis story implicitly interprets the two brothers' death as God's punishment for their sins.

Further examples that attest to the *topos* of the 'Killer wife' have been collected by Tal Ilan. In a paper given some years ago at a conference at Marburg University, Tal Ilan demonstrated that the motif of the 'Killer wife' was widespread in the Jewish world in the Greco-Roman period. This assumption is made plausible by the dispute between Jesus and the Pharisees concerning the woman with the seven husbands (cf. Mk 12.20-22; Mt. 22.25-26; Lk. 20.29-33). Moreover, further evidence is contained in rabbinic literature. Apart from the story about Homa in *b. Ketub.* 65a, which might have its roots in an authentic case, rabbinic literature also developed specific rulings with regard to the phenomenon of 'Killer wives', as well as a systematic approach to this problem. According to Rabbi (i.e. Judah ha-Nassi), a woman who has already lost two husbands shall not marry a third. A different opinion is expressed by Rabban Shimeon ben Gamaliel, who seems to be somewhat more lenient, and states that in such a case the woman should be allowed to marry a third husband, but not a fourth (*t. Shab.* 15.8).[5] Moreover, the *topos* of the 'Killer wife' also plays an important role in international folk literature through the ages. As Tal Ilan points out, 'the killer wife myth is an international folk-motif, present in the legend lore of many nations in many languages'.[6] The study by H. Granqvist, conducted already in the first half the twentieth century, clearly shows that this *topos* prevailed in traditional societies down to the twentieth century.[7] Recent studies include this motif within the larger context of the nature of Mediterranean Society and its value system.[8]

Against this wide-ranging background, a feminist approach to the figure of Sarah should create a framework that opens up the possibility of describing the general as well as the specific use of the 'Killer wife' *topos* in the *Tobit* narrative.

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[4] Schüngel-Straumann, *Tobit*, 83.

[5] Ilan, 'Babatha', 269-70.

[6] Ilan, 'Babatha', 267.

[7] Hilma Natalia Granquvist, *Marriage Conditions in a Palestinian Village* (Helsingfors: Akad. Buchhandlung, 1931), (n.v.)

[8] References are given by Ilan, 'Babatha', 268-69.

First, we should take into consideration the psychological dimension of the 'Killer wife' *topos*.[9] As Helen Schüngel-Straumann pointed out, this motif mirrors male fear of female sexuality, which is superior to men's sexuality because of its life-giving powers.[10] This general image is modified, however, since in our case Sarah herself appears in the role of the demon's victim. By connecting Sarah with the demon and his love for her, the narrator plainly shows that it is the demon and not Sarah who is responsible for her husbands' death.

As to Sarah's power, this aspect of the story seems ambivalent. On the one hand, Sarah is exonerated; on the other hand, however, the demon's violence also implies the diminishing of female power. A similar constellation can be found in the Tamar story. It should be underlined that in that narrative, not a demon but YHWH is responsible for the killing of the men. In the Genesis story, the brothers' death is caused by their sin. Moreover, Tamar is different from Sarah since she plays a very active part when she takes her fate into her own hands. Sarah, however, reacts to her distress not by action but by praying to God, which causes God to send the angel Raphael.[11]

Furthermore, it even appears possible to provide a feminist reading of the angel Raphael himself. It is obvious that, on the literary level, his victory over the wicked demon Asmodeus can be understood as a release for Sarah, the victim. Moreover, if we dare to switch to the story's psychological dimension again, Raphael's expulsion of the demon — be it conceptualized as a divorce, or else as the binding of the demon — can be regarded as a release from the threat of the powerful 'Killer wife', a threat which exists in men's collective mind.

These observations, and similar ones, may hopefully serve as a starting point for further, fresh insights into the *Tobit* narrative and the (gendered) characterization of its figures, from feminist viewpoints.

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[9] I am aware of the fact that analyzing the psychological dimensions of biblical literature has to be attempted with great caution with regard to methodology.

[10] Cf. Schüngel-Straumann, *Tobit*, 84: 'In diesem Volksglauben spiegelt sich das Wissen um die Überlegenheit der Frau, den Vorsprung, den sie in den Dingen des Lebens vor dem Mann hat, aber auch die uralte Angst des Mannes vor der weiblichen Sexualität, die Leben und Tod mit sich bringt. Die Erfahrung, dass Frauen neues Leben schaffen — und dabei das eigene oft verlieren — macht offenbar dem Mann bewußt, daß auch seine Rolle begrenzt ist, daß er spätestens nach der Geburt seines Sohnes in die zweite Linie zurücktreten muß.'

[11] This aspect is clarified by Schüngel-Straumann, *Tobit*, 85.

CHAPTER 5

SEEN AND HEARD, BUT HARDLY EATING: FEMALE CONSUMPTION IN THE BOOK OF TOBIT*

Naomi S.S. Jacobs

Introduction

Female Characters in Tobit

The ancient Jewish fairy tale that is *Tobit* may be summarized very simply:[1] young Tobiah,[2] accompanied by the disguised archangel Raphael, obtains potent fish organs to save himself and his bride, Sarah, from a groom-killing demon and to cure his father, Tobit, of blindness that has been caused by bird droppings. Yet such a summary fails to convey the numerous delights of the story, including clever biblical allusions, the occasional whimsical touch,[3] pithy wisdom instructions and memorable characters. There is also a variety of intriguing female individuals among the book's characters. Whether teaching, praying, cooking, arguing, blessing, beating up slaves or being beaten up themselves, these women and girls can be found throughout most of the story often at key moments in the plot. In fact, some of them are more than merely present but are also rather vocal, expressing their minds and hearts.

There is Deborah, Tobit's ancestor who, as a result of the death of Tobit's father, assumes the responsibility of educating Tobit in helping the poor (Tob. 1.8). There are the female slaves in the household of Sarah and of her parents, Edna and Raguel, who not only run errands (8.12-14) but boldly protest their fate of being abused by Sarah and curse her, 'Why do you beat us? May we never see a son or daughter of yours!' (3.8).[4]

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* This essay is a revised version of a paper delivered at The Women in the Biblical World Section of the 2005 SBL Annual Meeting in Philadelphia. In this revision, I have further developed the introduction, aspects of the analysis and the conclusion. I have also introduced my recent thoughts on fairy tales/folklore.

[1] All translations of *Tobit* are my own, except as noted.

[2] In this essay the characters' Hebrew names are used, e.g. Tobiah (= Tobias) and Hannah (= Anna).

[3] L.M. Wills, *The Jewish Novel in the Ancient World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 69, 82.

[4] Compare these slaves with Judith's female slave, who says nothing throughout the story. Even though she is not beaten, being given a decapitated head to handle is hardly an easy task (Jdt. 13.19).

There is Sarah herself, whose demon problem is one of the two crises in the story, along with Tobit's blindness. Sarah, whose name means 'princess', is also the necessary princess in the fairy tale, the maiden in distress whom the hero must rescue and acquire. Silent for most of the story, Sarah's voice emerges in an extensive soliloquy, in the form of a prayer (3.11-15), in which she thinks of hanging herself but is concerned with her father being reproached as a result of her suicide (3.10). She also finds it important to clarify that her sexual purity is intact (3.14) and that she has consequently not brought shame upon either herself or her father (3.15). As has been widely noted, this prayer corresponds markedly with a prayer made earlier by Tobit in which he too seeks death (3.2-6).[5] Apart from her prayer, Sarah also makes an impression through her tears, in welcoming Tobiah (7.8, weeping along with her parents over Tobit's blindness)[6] and saying 'amen, amen' to Tobiah's bedroom prayer that begs for life (8.8).

There is also Edna, Sarah's mother, who addresses Tobiah and Raphael when they arrive at her home (7.3). She too weeps with the rest of her family over Tobit's fate (7.8). On the wedding night she helps by fetching a scroll for the wedding contract (7.13), getting the bedroom ready (7.15) and encouraging her daughter (7.17).[7] Later, she helps to prepare food for the wedding party by attending to the bread while Raguel attends to the flocks (8.19). Edna also addresses Tobiah and blesses him as he leaves with Sarah, bidding him to treat her daughter well (10.12).

Perhaps the most notable female character in the story is Tobit's wife, Hannah. Hannah ventures out of the home to earn money by weaving when the blind Tobit is no longer able to be a breadwinner (2.11-12). Like the slaves, she too speaks her mind. She insists upon her (genuine) innocence when Tobit wrongly accuses her of stealing a goat and even calls into question his pursuit of righteousness (2.14). She challenges Tobit's decision to send their son on a journey to retrieve money, weeping and insisting that sending their child into danger is not worth the economic gain (5.18-20). In the course of Tobiah's absence, she is adamant that their son must be dead and weeps, bemoaning the decision to send her son on the journey once again (10.4-5). When Tobit claims there is probably a good reason for the delay and tells her to 'be quiet', her response is, 'You be quiet yourself!' (10.7). Hannah's responses are so strong that

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[5] For a detailed analysis that includes differences between the prayers, see B. Bow and G.W.E. Nickelsburg, 'Patriarchy with a Twist: Men and Women in Tobit', in *'Women Like This': New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco Roman World* (ed. A.-J. Levine; Early Judaism and its Literature, 1; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 127-43 (129-31) (48-63 [50-52] in this volume).

[6] Sarah also weeps in GI (possibly GIII) when she enters the bedroom to await Tobiah (4.16).

[7] In GII and OL (but not in GI), Edna cries before encouraging her daughter; GIII is ambiguous.

some scholars are of the opinion that, with her unbelief, she is functioning as a foil to Tobit's faith.[8] In this way, as many have noted, she is not unlike Job's wife, who encourages him to curse God (Job 2.9).[9]

Prominence of Female Characters Elsewhere

That this negative interpretation of Hannah is a defensible scholarly position provides but one inkling that, even though female characters are both present and vocal in the story, it does not mean that the story is either fully sympathetic to or aware of the genuine perspectives and needs of real, living, breathing women. Rather, the prominence of women as characters can be seen as part of a larger trend found in other post-exilic writings: *Esther*, *Ruth*, *Judith*, *Susanna* and *Aseneth*, each of which features a female protagonist. Of these writings, only *Ruth* seems to reflect a genuine female perspective. It is noteworthy that, to varying degrees, these writings — especially *Tobit* — are related by genre to slightly later Hellenistic romance novels, which themselves continue an interest in female characters seen earlier in Greek epic and drama. These Hellenistic novels are populated with female (and male) characters whose tormented inner feelings are expressed in full melodrama.[10] The emotionally overwrought Esther in the Greek versions of *Esther* — who reveals her disgust at being queen (C.26), faints and collapses (D.7) — is of the same type. Without positing direct transmission, one can see that the increased interest in female characters and their feelings in Jewish writings is not an isolated event.

Dominance of Male Characters in Tobit

The inequality with which *Tobit* depicts men and women has been widely noted.[11] Clearly, the words and doings of males are the main theme and the

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[8] M. Rabenau, *Studien zum Buch Tobit* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), 56-157.

[9] J. Fitzmyer, *Tobit* (CEJL; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 142.

[10] See Chariton's *Chaereas and* Callirhoe and Xenophon's *An Ephesian Tale*, found in English in B. Reardon, *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 21-124 and 128-69. Although dated some hundred years later than *Tobit* (Reardon, *Novels*, 17), both works may be identified as romances and exhibit common elements such as travel and lovers overcoming obstacles.

[11] In addition to Bow and Nickelsburg, 'Patriarchy with a Twist', see A.-J. Levine, 'Diaspora as Metaphor: Bodies and Boundaries in the Book of Tobit', in *Diaspora Jews and Judaism: Essays in Honor of and in Dialogue with A. Thomas Kraabel* (ed. J.A. Overman and R.S. McNamara; South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism, 41; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 105-17 (revised and updated, 3-22 in this volume); J.A. Glancy, 'The Mistress–Slave Dialectic: Paradoxes of Slavery in Three LXX Narratives', *JSOT* 21 (1996), 71-87 (reproduced in this volume as extensively revised, 200-211); E. Schuller, 'Tobit', in *Women's Bible Commentary* (ed. C.A. Newsom, S.H. Ringe and J.E. Lapsley; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 3rd edn,

words and doings of females are ancillary to it.[12] Women are extensions of the men in their lives. Deborah stands in the place of Tobit's father[13] and Sarah's own soliloquy, as noted, emphasizes her father's needs above her own. Furthermore, Sarah is viewed as an object for Tobiah to inherit.[14] Unlike Tobit's prayer, Sarah's prayer is not emblematic of the Israelite/Jewish people as a whole; it is purely personal.[15] Edna, for her part, is almost always working in concert with her husband.[16] As noted above, Hannah is seen by scholars as a possible foil to Tobit, emphasizing his piety through her doubt.

At the same time, it has been suggested that the narrative potentially breaks out of this framework at points, providing a 'twist' in which the voices of women can be seen as not only legitimate, but more 'in the right' than those of the men.[17] This is particularly the case with Hannah's protests regarding her innocence and Tobiah being sent away on a dangerous journey.[18] Hannah's protests may be an example of how women's genuine concerns are sometimes expressed by female literary characters through the backdoor, as it were.[19] At the same time, Hannah's speeches may be seen from the perspective of deconstructionism, in which the story itself contains elements that undermine the view that Tobit is a completely pious man.[20] Whatever the case may be, it would appear that there is an element of richness to the narrative that defies facile characterization.

Nonetheless, despite some genuine evidence of a 'twist', this essay will illustrate that the depiction of females in *Tobit* is even more problematic than it may first appear. In so doing, the paper will use a novel approach that involves carefully examining how male and female consumption are depicted in the story.

2012), 376-82. A feminist sensitivity also informs H. Schüngel-Straumann, *Tobit: übersetzt und ausgelegt* (Freiburg: Herder, 2000) as a whole.

[12] Levine, 'Diaspora as Metaphor', 110 (9).

[13] Bow and Nickelsburg, 'Patriarchy with a Twist', 134 (54).

[14] Levine, 'Diaspora as Metaphor', 110 (9).

[15] Bow and Nickelsburg, 'Patriarchy with a Twist', 129-31 (50-52).

[16] Bow and Nickelsburg, 'Patriarchy with a Twist', 137-38 (58).

[17] Bow and Nickelsburg, 'Patriarchy with a Twist', 127 (48).

[18] Bow and Nickelsburg, 'Patriarchy with a Twist', 136-37 (57-58). Note, however, that Hannah's concerns are modeled on an exchange between Isaac and Rebecca over Jacob's journey as found in *Jub.* 27.13-18, which possibly shares a source with *Tobit*. See further Rabenau, *Buch Tobit*, 158-60.

[19] For instance, in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, two of the least likeable characters, Mrs. Bennet and Lady Catherine, are both vocal opponents of the entailment of property on the male line — a practice with serious and harmful effects on women. See further J. Lowder Newton, 'Pride and Prejudice: Power, Fantasy and Subversion in Jane Austen', *Feminist Studies* (1978), 24-42 (30).

[20] On Tobit's self-righteousness see Bow and Nickelsburg, 'Patriarchy with a Twist', 136 (57); E.S. Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews Amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 151-52.

The Importance of Consumption in General and in *Tobit*

Consumption is one of several aspects pertaining to food and eating — a subject that lies deep within human consciousness. Food is a part of an infant's earliest experiences and is critical to its bonding with its caretakers. Obtaining food in ancient, traditional and even modern societies occupies major investments of time, energy and emotional strain. Food is also intimately linked with cultural expression and lends itself very readily to symbolic meaning. In a word, food is one path to the unconscious mind. Exploring the role of food and eating potentially allows the interpreter to bypass the ostensible claims made by the narrative and examine more directly what is left unspoken. It is thus perhaps not surprising that the act of consumption is a persistent and important theme in many narratives across world literature,[21] Israelite and Jewish writings[22] and notably in *Tobit*.[23] Out of some 36 references to food and eating in this book, approximately 20 are linked with some form of consumption. Key instances include:

1. Tobit's refusal to eat 'Gentile food' (Tob. 1).
2. Tobit's delay in eating a Shavuot meal to attend to a compatriot's corpse (ch. 2).
3. Tobiah's eating of a fish that sought to eat of him (ch. 6).
4. Tobiah's refusal to eat Raguel and Edna's welcoming meal in Ectabana until he can marry Sarah (ch. 7).

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[21] Many examples may be found in N. Kiell, *Food and Drink in Literature: A Selectively Annotated Bibliography* (London: Scarecrow, 1995).

[22] Important contributions include G. Feeley-Harnik, *The Lord's Table: The Meaning of Food in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, rev. and enlarged edn, 1994); A. Brenner and J.W. van Henten, eds., *Food and Drink in the Biblical Worlds* (Semeia, 86; Atlanta: SBL, 1999); D.M. Sharon, *Patterns of Destiny: Narrative Structures of Foundation and Doom in the Hebrew Bible* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2002); C. Bergmann, 'The Ability/Inability to Eat: Determining Life and Death in Bel et Draco', *JSJ* 35 (2004), 262-83; K. Stone, *Practicing Safer Texts: Food, Sex and Bible in Queer Perspective* (London: T&T Clark International, 2005); N. MacDonald, *Not Bread Alone: The Uses of Food in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[23] The most complete discussion of food in Tobit is found in N.S. Jacobs, '"And I saw that the delicacies were many": A Commentary on Food and Eating in the Book of Tobit' (Ph.D. diss., Durham University, 2007), available online at http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/2443. See also N.S. Jacobs, '"You did not hesitate to get up and leave the dinner": Food and Eating in the Narrative of Tobit with some Attention to Tobit's Shavuot Meal', in *The Book of Tobit: Text, Tradition, Theology: Papers of the First International Conference on the Deuterocanonical Books, Pápa, Hungary, 20–21 May, 2004* (ed. G.G. Xeravits and J. Zsengellér; JSJSup, 98; Leiden: Brill 2005), 121-38; and N. MacDonald, 'Food and Drink in Tobit and Other "Diaspora Novellas"', in *Studies in the Book of Tobit: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (ed. M.R.J. Bredin; LSTS, 55; London: T&T Clark International, 2006), 165-78.

5. A description of a two-week wedding celebration in Ecbatana (chs. 8 and 9).
6. Raphael's confession that he never truly eats or drinks (ch. 12).

Consumption is not merely important to the plot (the chain of events that leads to Tobiah's journey begins with the Shavuot meal) but is also a significant structuring element. Tobit's delay in eating the Shavuot meal (2.2, 4) is paralleled by Tobiah's delay in eating the welcoming meal (7.11), while both delays are linked with a life-changing event, one with death and one with marriage. The theme of non- or delayed consumption also finds correspondence with Tobit's avoidance of 'Gentile food' (1.10-12) and Raphael's avoidance of earthly food and drink (12.19).[24] In these latter cases, boundaries are respected by not consuming; for Tobit, it is the Israelite/non-Israelite boundary and for Raphael it is the heaven/earth boundary.

Acts of eating and drinking also play a structural role in the book by marking the opening and closing of scenes, particularly during the account of the wedding and the subsequent defeat of the demon. An initial account of washing and eating is followed by Tobiah's insistence on getting married (7.9-11). After the wedding, the scene closes with 'they began to eat and drink' (7.14). A new scene resulting in the defeat of the demon begins with the words, 'When they had finished eating and drinking they wanted to retire' (8.1).

Consumption, along with other references to food in *Tobit*, is far more than a structuring element; it also conveys two major themes: (a) the notion of righteousness and (b) the raw, symbolic power of the subconscious. Whether one eats or not is linked with doing the right thing, and concerns over the consumption by the poor and by guests (1.8; 2.2; 7.10; 8.19-20) are significant for the tale. Even Tobit's accusation of his wife is grounded in the language of consumption, when he proclaims that it is forbidden to eat what is stolen (2.13). The rich potency of the subconscious is seen most prominently in ch. 6, which may be described as a kind of vision quest and/or rite of passage. In an exciting eat-or-be-eaten struggle, Tobiah overpowers (6.4) and consumes (6.6) a large dangerous fish that seeks to eat his foot (6.3) and, guided by Raphael, harvests its medicinal organs (heart, liver, gall bladder) (6.5). The fish's attempt to eat of Tobiah draws on numerous ancient themes including sea monsters, death as a consuming entity and eating as a means of obtaining power.[25] It is also noteworthy that at the deep, magical level Tobit's ailment and cure are both linked with consumption: the bird droppings that blind him are a digestive by-product, and the organs that heal him are taken from a fish that is eaten.

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[24] In GII (S), Raphael speaks only of not eating, but 4Q196 also refers to not drinking.

[25] See the discussion in Jacobs, 'Delicacies', 161-66.

What One Learns by Studying Food Consumption Patterns in *Tobit*

The importance of food consumption in *Tobit* is one good reason for exploring the presentation of female eating and drinking in the story. The fact that consumption is a common and regular part of life is another and, as Miriam Peskowitz has noted, 'gender can be most powerful in its ordinariness, in things that become common, nearly invisible, until they seem to be natural'.[26] In addition, consumption transcends rubrics that have been used in some past studies of gender in *Tobit*, such as religious life and family life, because occasions such as the Shavuot meal are an example of both.[27]

By determining whether or not women are considered as eaters in a story in which consumption is important, yet at the same time ostensibly ordinary, one learns much about the gender roles in the narrative. This method draws on the concept of focalization in narrative theory, as applied to biblical texts by Mieke Bal.[28] An analysis of focalization is somewhat like noticing where the camera is being pointed in a film. As Bal describes it, the literary critic must ask, 'who speaks, who sees and who acts'.[29] In the same vein, this essay focuses on 'who eats?' Major scenes related to consumption will be examined for indications of which characters are described as eating and which are not, with comparisons made between male and female characters. As a result of this analysis, more general conclusions will be drawn concerning the position of women in *Tobit*.

Background Information

Males and Female Commensality

For a study of female consumption in *Tobit*, it is first necessary to establish whether men and women were known to eat together or separately during Hellenistic times. Whereas it is clear that Etruscan men and (fully clothed)[30] women dined together as far back as the fourth century BCE,[31] less is known about the Hellenistic period. Even so, it is likely that the wealthy and powerful

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[26] M. Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies: Rabbis, Gender, and History* (Contraversions, 9; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 21.

[27] This distinction is made throughout Bow and Nickelsburg, 'Patriarchy with a Twist'.

[28] For a rich discussion of focalization, see M. Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 3rd edn, 2009), 145-63.

[29] Mieke Bal, 'Dealing/with/Women: Daughters in the Book of Judges', in *Women in the Hebrew Bible: A Reader* (ed. A. Bach; New York: Routledge, 1999), 317-33 (319).

[30] By contrast, the 'flute girls' who accompanied men at meals in ancient Greece are often depicted in various stages of undress.

[31] K.M.D. Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet: Images of Conviviality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 27.

women of the time would eat with their spouses, at least privately,[32] while local customs could vary. In respect of Jewish dining customs, Ben Sira's admonition, 'Never dine with another man's wife, or revel with her at wine' (μετὰ ὑπάνδρου γυναικὸς μὴ κάθου τὸ σύνολον μὴ συμβολοκοπήσῃς μετ'αὐτῆς ἐν οἴνῳ), is probably the most relevant.[33] The prohibition assumes that men and women, even those not married to each other, could be a part of the same dining party. With *Ben Sira* (late second century BCE) generally placed in a similar time period as *Tobit* (early third century BCE) and both works belonging to the common genre of wisdom literature — even with the uncertainty of *Tobit*'s provenance — it is not unreasonable to expect men and women to dine together in a work like *Tobit*.[34]

Issues of Text, Redaction, Narrators and Biblical Allusions

Having established the wider cultural context to which *Tobit* belongs in respect of female dining, it is essential to review background information on the book that can impact on how it is to be interpreted before proceeding to the textual analysis.

First, the story is found among the Dead Sea Scrolls (henceforth Scrolls),[35] three Greek text-types,[36] numerous Old Latin manuscripts[37] and in other

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[32] Dunbabin, *Roman Banquet*, 25, 67-68.

[33] Sir. 9.9 (NRSV) as noted by Kathleen Corley, *Private Women, Public Meals: Social Conflict in the Synoptic Tradition* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993), 70. The following Hebrew is extant in MS A: עם בעלה אל תטעם.

[34] Centuries later, the Mishnah (*m. Ber.* 7.2, *Ket.* and possibly *Shab.* 1.3) also reveals that Jewish men and women, including married couples, ate together at least on occasion.

[35] Tobit is attested in four Aramaic manuscripts (4Q196, 4Q197, 4Q198, 4Q199) and one Hebrew manuscript (4Q200). All of these manuscripts are fragmentary. Readings of these manuscripts are available in J.A. Fitzmyer, 'Tobit', in *Qumran Cave 4: XIV. Parabiblical Texts, Part 2* (DJD, 19; Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 1-76 (and Pls. I-X); and K. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer samt den Inschriften aus Palästina, dem Testament Levis aus der Kairoer Genisa, der Fastenrolle und den alten talmudischen Zitaten, Band 2* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 172-86. See S. Weeks, S.J. Gathercole and L.T. Stuckenbruck, *The Book of Tobit: Ancient and Medieval Versions* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004) for corrected readings.

[36] These are known as GI, GII and GIII. GII, represented by the fourth-/fifth-century codex Sinaiticus and by the eleventh-century minuscule 319 (3.6–6.16 only) is the closest to the Scrolls of all the Greek text types. GI, a more abbreviated version of the story, is found in codices Vaticanus (mid-fourth century CE) and Alexandrinus (fifth century CE) as well as many other witnesses. It occasionally preserves ancient readings. GIII, found in fourteenth-century minuscules, is only attested for part of the story (approximately 6.8–13.6) and can share readings with the Scrolls not attested in Sinaiticus. On these text types, see further Weeks, *Book of Tobit*, 11-15, and Beate Ego in this volume, 67-74.

[37] These manuscripts date from the eighth to the tenth centuries. Each manuscript has its own characteristics but coincides largely with GII despite occasionally preserving different, ancient readings. See further Weeks, *Book of Tobit*, 21-26.

versions. It is at least as old at the early third century BCE and of unknown provenance. No single textual witness fully preserves the book as extant from Second Temple times; many readings attested in the fragmentary evidence[38] of the Scrolls are found in some versions but not others. Even readings from fourth-century Sinaiticus and MS 309, which make up Greek text type II and form the basis of most modern translations, must be augmented — at the very minimum — from two other Greek text types and the Old Latin manuscripts. These observations are important for this study because a crucial reference to female consumption (10.7b) is absent in Sinaiticus, but present in several other versions. This study will also use a number of medieval Jewish versions, all of which are dependent either upon a Greek text-type or Latin versions (Old Latin or the later Vulgate).[39] These versions will be used to illustrate that even pre-modern Jewish readers occasionally had different cultural expectations from those evident in ancient versions of *Tobit*.

Second, after over a decade of careful study, this author is convinced that *Tobit* shows definitive signs of multiple hands at work. While providing full proof of such redaction is beyond the confines of this essay,[40] it would nevertheless refer to the use of repetitive resumption, doublets and distinctive vocabulary. Regardless of one's stance concerning the book's redaction, however, one can hardly fail to notice that the narrative is neither always linear nor, as Margarete Plath — the first woman to write on *Tobit* — indicated, logically consistent.[41] This is especially significant because at one point in the narrative (8.1) assessing whether female consumption takes place is hampered by a nonlinear narrative. Nonetheless, for the purposes of this study and for the sake of a coherent literary analysis, the narrative will be treated as a unity as far as is possible.

Third, the fact that *Tobit* has two narrators affects its analysis. The first is Tobit himself who narrates the events of 1.1–3.6, with the remainder of the story being told by a traditional omniscient narrator. Because two distinct authorial presences are involved, it will be important to determine whether or not they present the same picture of female consumption.

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[38] See further J.A. Fitzmyer, 'The Aramaic and Hebrew Fragments of Tobit from Qumran Cave 4', *CBQ* 57 (1995), 655-75.

[39] See further Weeks, *Book of Tobit*, 32-46.

[40] See my forthcoming article, 'Scribal Innovation and the Book of Tobit: A Long Overdue Discussion', in a volume to be published by Brill (expected 2016).

[41] M. Plath, 'Zum Buch Tobit', *TSK* 74 (1901), 377-414 (401).

Fourth, it is relevant that *Tobit* alludes frequently to biblical writings, with the behavior of its characters mirroring the behavior of other biblical characters. A popular source is Genesis.[42] This tendency, which reveals that a character's actions are indebted to another biblical scene, naturally complicates the analysis and will be relevant for at least one instance of female consumption (10.7b, not in Sinaiticus).

Depictions of Consumption which Potentially Include Females

Avoiding Gentile Food (1.3-18)

Beginning with two passages narrated by Tobit in the first and second chapters, one finds depictions of consumption that one might expect to include female eaters as well as eaters who are children and/or slaves — related social categories that were frequently grouped together in antiquity.[43] In the first passage (1.3-18), Tobit prides himself on strictly avoiding what he calls 'the food of the Gentiles', a behaviour which forms part of a longer list of righteous deeds presented in the story's introduction:

> And when I became a man I took a wife from the seed of our father and I begot of her a son and I called his name Tobiah. After I was taken captive to the Assyrians...everyone of my kinsfolk and my people ate the food of the Gentiles [οἱ ἐκ τοῦ γένους μου ἤσιον ἐκ τῶν ἄρτων τῶν ἐθνῶν], but I kept myself from eating the food of the Gentiles [ἐγὼ δὲ συνετήρησα τὴν ψυχήν μου μὴ φαγεῖν ἐκ τῶν ἄρτων τῶν ἐθνῶν] (1.9-11).

Tobit emphasizes that he personally has not eaten Gentile food, but says nothing about his wife's and son's eating, even though he has just mentioned them. Assuming that he does not include them among 'everyone of my kinsfolk and my people' who eat the food, Tobit may consider his actions to represent those of his entire household. Alternatively, Tobit may be the only member of the family who is confronted with eating situations that pose the threat of Gentile food, on account of his work as the king's purchaser. Whatever the case may be, it is evident that, for Tobit, the official narrator, it simply does not matter whether or not Hannah and Tobiah are eating Gentile food; Tobit's emphasis is upon demonstrating that he, Tobit, is righteous. As a result, food consumption by Hannah and her son is entirely absent.

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[42] In addition to the extended parallels with Abraham's quest for a wife for Isaac (Gen. 24) especially in Tob. 7, other allusions include Gen. 18.6-7 (visit of three angels) in Tob. 8.19; Gen. 22.6 and 8 (Abraham and Isaac walking together to the Akedah) in Tob. 6.2; and Gen. 2.18 (finding a companion for Adam) in Tob. 8.6.

[43] E.g. Col. 3.18-24.

The Shavuot Meal (2.2-7)

In the second passage (2.2-7), Tobit narrates how he abandons a festive Shavuot meal to attend to a compatriot's corpse.[44] This action is so important that it will later garner praise from the archangel Raphael (12.13). Just as with the previous passage, Tobit begins by referring to Hannah and Tobiah, who have significantly been restored to him after a period of separation following his difficulties with the Assyrian ruler Sennacherib.

> Under King Esarhaddon of Assyria my wife Hannah and Tobiah my son were restored to me and on our festival of Pentecost,... there was for me a good dinner [ἐγενήθη μοι ἄριστον καλόν] and I reclined to eat [καὶ ἀνέπεσα τοῦ ἀριστῆσαι] (2.1).

Again, only Tobit eats explicitly. He speaks of a good dinner '*for me*'. He speaks of himself alone as reclining. He states that the table was set up '*for me*' and that the many relishes were set up '*for me*'.

> [A]nd the table was set up for me [καὶ παρετέθη μοι ἡ τράπεζα] and many relishes were set up for me [καὶ παρετέθη μοι ὀψαρια πλείονα].

Sending his son to find a male guest, he states unambiguously that he wishes the guest to 'eat together with *me*':

> [A]nd I said to my son Tobiah, 'Go...and whatever poor person you may find of our kinsfolk from the exiles in Nineveh...bring him and he shall eat together with me [καὶ φάγεται κοινῶς μετ' ἐμοῦ] (2.2).

When Tobiah reveals that the corpse of a compatriot is lying in the marketplace, Tobit abandons his meal to attend to it. Returning from attending to the body, he alone eats the food sadly, 'When I returned, I washed myself and ate the food in sorrow' (καὶ ἤσθιον τὸν ἄρτον μετὰ πένθους).[45] Notably, the consumption of Hannah and Tobiah is absent, even though this occasion marks the restoration of the family to Tobit (2.1) after a long absence. Hannah is not even mentioned by name as the one who has presumably cooked this feast; all food-related preparations are expressed in an agentless passive mode.[46]

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[44] A full discussion of this passage may be found in Jacobs, '"You did not hesitate to get up and leave the dinner"'.

[45] A translation of τὸν ἄρτον as 'my food' would also be correct and would further emphasize Tobit as the only eater.

[46] In Tob. 1.20, the narrative states that Tobit has lost all his property so that the possibility of female slaves preparing the meal is less likely. Even if female slaves had prepared the meal, they are equally marginalized by Tobit's use of the passive voice.

Strikingly, this scene goes against the spirit of the Shavuot holiday as described in Deut. 16.11. Although wives are not mentioned, this verse makes it clear that neither gender nor slave status are reason for exclusion from the celebration; it may be that wives are not mentioned specifically because Deut. 16.11 is addressed to both men and women.

> Rejoice before the LORD your God — you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female slaves, the Levites resident in your towns, as well as the strangers, the orphans and the widows who are among you — at the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name (Deut. 16.11).

In *Jubilees*, however, one finds that the focus of the Shavuot celebration may lie with a senior male relative:

> Rebecca made fresh cakes of bread (*dāfenta*) out of new wheat. She gave it to her son Jacob to bring to his father Abraham some of the first fruits of the land so that he would eat (it) (*yeblā'*) and bless the Creator of everything before he died. Isaac, too, sent through Jacob [his] excellent peace offering [and wine to his father] Abraham for him to eat and drink (*yeblā' wa-yestay*) (*Jub.* 22.4-5).[47]

The emphasis upon Abraham's eating, however, is due to the special situation of Abraham's imminent death. Moreover, in *Jubilees*, unlike *Tobit*, Rebecca's food preparation of fresh cakes is made explicit and seen as a counterpart to Isaac's peace offering, with Jacob delivering both the cakes and the peace offering. The overall theme is the honoring of an older male relative by all members of a family, which is very different from Tobit's depiction of the meal as *his*, to be shared with a guest but not with his own family.

Interestingly, some later versions of the book do not present Tobit as eating alone. Some Old Latin versions include at least Tobiah in the meal with the guest in Tob. 2.2, as Tobit says 'with us' (*nobiscum*) instead of 'with me' (*mecum*).[48] Medieval Jewish manuscript Constantinople 1516 includes not only Tobiah but others too with the potential inclusion of Hannah, 'I and all who are sitting with me (עמי היושבים וכל אני) will not eat until you come back'.[49] This suggests that for at least some pre-modern readers Tobit's solo dining may have seemed unusual.

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[47] Translation and critical text by J.C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees* (2 vols.; SAT, 88; Louvain: Peeters, 1989), modified slightly by the present author.

[48] These include Corbeiensis, Regius, Alcalà Bible and Sangermanensis 15, all of which date roughly to the ninth century. Corbeiensis and Regius, typically, are close to the readings in the Scrolls and in Sinaiticus.

[49] For more on this manuscript see Weeks, *Book of Tobit*, 32-35.

As was the case with the previous passage, the exclusion of women and children as eaters is probably not deliberate. With a narrator interested in highlighting his own righteousness by wishing to host a guest and then attending to the dead, as well as relating the chain of events that led to his blindness, female consumption is simply not on the radar.

The Wedding Celebration at Rages (8.20; 9.6)

One might think that the exclusive emphasis upon Tobit's consumption in the previous two examples can be explained by the fact that both are narrated by Tobit himself. As it turns out, however, female consumption is omitted in passages neither narrated by Tobit nor occurring in his household. In 8.20, Raguel tells Tobiah, his new son-in-law, to stay on for double the usual time for a wedding celebration, claiming that this will cheer Sarah up:

> And he called Tobiah and said to him, 'for fourteen days you shall not stir from here, but, rather, you will remain eating and drinking [ἔσθων καὶ πίνων] with me and you will gladden the tormented soul of my daughter.

Although the stated purpose of Tobiah's extended stay is Sarah's happiness, nothing in the invitation suggests that Tobiah will actually be eating with her. After all, Raguel says that Tobiah will eat with '*me*' not with '*us*'. (The concept of a father-in-law eager to eat with his son-in-law may recall, if anything, the actions of the Levite and his father-in-law in Judg. 19.) However, could Raguel have the entire household in mind despite inviting Tobiah to eat with 'me'? The answer to this question is supplied later in the story. The following passage describes a brief incident that occurs during the wedding feast. Raphael, who has quickly picked up some money Tobit had deposited with a relative named Gabael, returns with Gabael to the wedding feast.

> And they [Raphael and Gabael] arose early together and came to the wedding party. And they came to Raguel and they saw Tobiah reclining [at the table], He sprang up and greeted Gabael, who wept and blessed him with the words, 'Good and noble son of a father good and noble, upright and generous! May the Lord grant the blessing of heaven to you and your wife and to your wife's father and mother. Blessed be God, for I see in Tobias the very image of my cousin Tobit (9.6, NRSV translation).

Tobiah is found by the side of Raguel, just as presupposed in Raguel's invitation, not by the side of his wife. Although this scene continues with Gabael blessing Tobiah and his wife as well as his wife's parents, there is no indication that Sarah is by Tobiah's side. Again, it may be significant that two other versions of the tale envision a different scenario. The first is a very ancient reading of 9.6 from the GI type text, which is attested as far back as the mid-fourth century by codex Vaticanus:

> And they [Raphael and Gabael] arose early together and came to the wedding party. And Tobiah blessed his wife [καὶ εὐλόγησεν Τωβιας τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ].

In this version, Sarah's presence is clearly established, as she is blessed directly by her husband, instead of indirectly by Gabael. An early Medieval Hebrew version, found in the Cairo Genizah and dated to the thirteenth century, also makes it clear that Sarah is present through Gabael's words by using the near demonstrative (this) in reference to her:[50]

> And he said, 'Blessed be the Eternal God of Israel, who has united you in joy with this lass [הנערה הזאת]'.

The Meal Immediately Following the Wedding (7.9; 8.13b)

The next eating incident takes place at the home of Raguel, Edna and Sarah. Here, because it is impossible to find a fully linear narrative for vv. 7.9–8.13b, one finds a situation comparable to Schödinger's cat, which in the classic thought experiment is both alive and dead. One can find evidence in this passage for Sarah being an eater and also evidence for her not being an eater. The case for Sarah as a non-eater will be presented first. Edna's status as an eater will also be relevant here.

It is clear from 7.9 onwards that those sitting at the table include Tobiah, Raphael and Raguel. This verse states that 'they had bathed and washed themselves and had reclined to dine', clearly referring to the travelers. The scene continues with the conversation between Tobiah and Raguel, concluding with Raguel's agreement to let Tobiah marry Sarah. Sarah, however, does not appear to be present at the table according to 7.12 because Raguel calls her to come to him. Moreover, Edna does not appear to be present at the table either because, according to 7.13, Raguel calls her to bring him writing material.

Tobit 7.14 states that 'they began to eat and drink', but it would seem that Sarah is not included because in the very next verse (7.15) Edna is instructed to take Sarah to the bedroom. Unless she returns, Edna appears not to be eating with the family either. Moreover, after Sarah and Edna depart, the eating process continues until 8.1 that states, 'When they had finished eating and drinking, they wanted to go to sleep'. One wonders when and where Sarah is able to eat on her wedding night.

Yet one could also make a case that 'When they had finished eating and drinking, they wanted to go to sleep' could refer to both Sarah and Tobiah, as maintained by Lawrence M. Wills.[51] This is a reasonable assumption because the

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[50] Cairo Genizah T-S A 45.26. Concerning this manuscript see further Weeks, *Book of Tobit*, 32.

[51] Wills, *Jewish Novel*, 79.

verb κοιμάω, which in the middle/passive can refer to both sex and sleep, occurs another time explicitly in reference to the couple, 'And they went to sleep [ἐκοιμήθησαν] for the night' after praying (8.9). (The only other instance of κοιμάω in the story occurs in 2.9, referring to Tobit's ill-fated repose outdoors.) Another verb referring to sleep is also used in 8.13b, in which the female slave whom Raguel sends to determine whether or not Tobiah is alive finds the couple 'sound asleep together' (ὑπνοῦντας κοινῶς).[52] Tobit 8.9 appears to parallel 8.1. Another reason why 8.1 would seem to refer only to Tobiah and Sarah is that they are the only characters who actually go to sleep. After all, neither Raguel nor Edna go to bed; Raguel digs a grave and with Edna awaits the news from a female slave as to whether or not Tobiah has survived. On the basis of this evidence, the claim could be made that, at some stage of the story's development, Sarah's food consumption may have been described, albeit combined with that of Tobiah. However, in its final form the narrative, which focuses primarily on details concerning the wedding, is not at all concerned with the absence of a reference to female consumption that has resulted from the apparent addition of extra material. Interestingly, four Jewish Medieval versions have Tobiah and Sarah going together to the bedroom in 8.1, which would support the view that Sarah and Tobiah did eat together.[53]

Hannah's Fasting (10.7b, not in Sinaiticus)

The preceding discussion shows that *Tobit* does not present a single clear-cut instance of female consumption. It does, however, offer a clear-cut instance of female non-consumption in which Hannah fasts because she thinks that Tobiah is dead. Although not found in Sinaiticus,[54] this reading is amply attested in three independent versions: in the Greek text types GI and GIII as well as among Old Latin manuscripts.

GI 10.7b, represented here by Vaticanus, reads:

> Every day she would go out to the road that they had taken; for days she would eat no food [ἄρτον οὐκ ἤσθιεν] and during the nights she did not cease lamenting her son Tobiah.

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[52] This is despite the fact that the sentence in the current version continues with 'so they took the young man and brought him into the bedroom', which does not include Sarah.

[53] These include Constantinople 1516, North French Miscellany, Gaster Hebrew and the Aramaic Bodleian Hebrew Ms. 2339. On these versions see further Weeks, *Book of Tobit I*, 32-35, 37-41, 44-46.

[54] S reads instead, 'and she would heed no one' (οὐκ ἐπείθετο οὐδενὶ).

GIII 10.7b reads:

> And she would rush out, peer down the road in which her son was travelling, until the sun set. And she came into her house and did not taste anything [οὐκ ἐγεύσατο οὐδενὸς] and she was unable to sleep.

The Old Latin, 10.7b, here represented by Regius,[55] reads:

> And leaping up, she would examine the road [upon] which her son had set out and she would eat nothing [*nihil gustabat*] and when the sun set she would go in and lament, crying all the night and she would not sleep.

It may not be surprising that the absence of female consumption is more likely to be noted than its presence. It has been generally observed that fasting, which involves control of one's own body, is a frequently adopted practice (spiritual or otherwise) for women and others who lack significant personal power. The story of Judith (Jdt. 8.6)[56] and later comments by Roman writers indicate that fasting was particularly linked to Jewish women's spirituality.[57] Moreover, it is most likely that *Tobit* wishes to recall the biblical Hannah, Samuel's mother, who has trouble eating due to being childless (1 Sam. 1.7-8). Given the prominent use of biblical prototypes elsewhere in *Tobit*, there would seem to be a strong motivation to link Hannah with her biblical counterpart.

Hannah's Fasting Compared with Male Food Avoidance and Delayed Consumption and Fasting Elsewhere in *Tobit*

At this point, it would be worth comparing this single instance of female non-consumption with instances of male non-consumption and delayed consumption. As already referred to, there are four occasions during which Tobit, Tobiah or Raphael make a point of not eating:

1. Tobit avoids eating Gentile food.
2. Tobit delays his Shavuot dinner, first to await a guest and then to attend to a corpse.
3. Tobiah refuses to eat until he can marry Sarah.
4. Raphael states that he has not consumed food and/or drink during his mission.[58]

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[55] See also Old Latin Manuscripts such as Corbeiensis, Mazarine 257, Bobbiensis, Monacensis, Bible de Rodas, Alcalà, Sangermanensis 15.

[56] This seemingly exaggerated account makes the point in part through its excess.

[57] For sources see V. Grimm, *From Feasting to Fasting, the Evolution of a Sin: Attitudes to Food in Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge), 28.

[58] See the discussion on alternate readings in n. 24.

Each action is an example of being pious (keeping *kosher*, feeding the hungry and attending to the dead) or doing the right thing (bringing about a marriage, or respecting the boundaries between heaven and earth). By contrast, Hannah's fasting is neither about being pious nor about doing the right thing; it is purely personal and may even suggest lack of faith. Observe further that, although Tobiah's actions also have a biblical model — with Tobiah mirroring how Abraham's servant refuses to eat until he can speak of his mission to acquire a bride for Isaac in Gen. 24.33 — Tobiah's biblical parallel differs markedly from that of Hannah. The servant achieves a commendable goal, whereas the biblical Hannah merely expresses her misery. Hannah's fasting contrasts with male non-consumption, just as Sarah's personal prayer contrasts with Tobit's prayer that represents all of Israel.

It is also worth examining Hannah's fasting in light of the only other reference to actual fasting in the story (as opposed to delayed eating or food avoidance). Once again, the reading is not present in Sinaiticus but is amply attested among other versions.[59]

> Vaticanus 12.8:
> Good is prayer with fasting [ἀγαθὸν προσευχὴ μετὰ νηστείας]
>
> Third Greek 12.8:
> Good is prayer with fasting [ἀγαθὸν προσευχὴ μετὰ νηστείας]
>
> Regius 12.8:
> Good is prayer with fasting... [*Bona est oratio cum ieiunio*][60]

All the versions of Tob. 12.8 that refer to fasting combine it with prayer, and view it as righteous behavior. By contrast, Hannah's fasting neither includes prayer nor is presented as righteous behavior. Furthermore, according to the reading that follows in GIII ('but almsgiving is better than both'), it would seem that even fasting with righteous intention is inferior to almsgiving — an activity in which no female character in *Tobit* participates.[61]

Conclusion

Female food consumption is entirely absent in *Tobit* even where it might be expected, such as in observing dietary regulations, an important celebratory Shavuot meal, a wedding celebration and, in the current form of the story, a key wedding meal. The absence of female consumption offers a unique way to demonstrate that women and girls — however vocal — are denied their full

[59] Sinaiticus 12.8, 'Good is prayer with truth' (ἀγαθὸν προσευχὴ μετὰ ἀληθείας).
[60] All other Old Latin manuscripts consulted share this reading, as does the Vulgate.
[61] Bow and Nickelsburg, 'Patriarchy with a Twist', 132 (52-53).

humanity. It is notable that one of the key features of non-material beings is often their inability to eat. This is seen in 1 En. 15.11, in which the spirits of the dead giants long to eat but cannot do so;[62] in Lk. 24.37-43, when Jesus proves that he is not a ghost by eating; and in *Tobit*, when the archangel Raphael reinforces his lack of earthy physicality by not eating (Tob. 12.19). The females in *Tobit* thus appear to lack a fully physical presence in the narrative world. They are disembodied, like spirits or ghosts, floating in and out as needed without fully 'touching ground'. Or, perhaps, they may be compared with cardboard cutouts, looking human but not entirely so.

Female exclusion from eating goes beyond the level of the physical body in *Tobit*. Consumption is both a structuring element and a link — most strikingly in Tobiah's struggle with the fish –with what might be called the tale's unconscious world. In light of both of these trends, it might be extrapolated that women and girls are denied an active role in the story's *deep structure*. This extrapolation is confirmed when one considers the book in terms of folkloric tale-types[63] and, above all, the tale-type known as the Monster's Bride (ATU 507). In this light, Sarah cannot be much more than a victim of dark forces that the hero must overcome,[64] as noted in previous research.[65]

Furthermore, *Tobit* links consumption with righteousness. Female characters are thus denied an important and meaningful way of being righteous in a wisdom story in which righteousness is a central and recurring theme. Even Hannah's fasting, which has the potential of being a sign of righteousness, is clearly not portrayed as such. One could thus say that this analysis reveals that women are largely excluded at a spiritual level too, again confirming previous research.[66]

And yet, as early as the fourth century CE, the overly androcentric consumption scenes were altered potentially to include women in a variety of pre-modern versions of the book. To some extent, this may be explained by changes in dining customs. After all, the later Jewish medieval versions also replace Tobit's reclining with sitting in 2.1. At the same time, there might be something about *Tobit* that particularly lends itself to the absence of female consumption, aside from its fairytale origins.

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[62] These spirits may be compared to the 'hungry ghosts' with enlarged bellies in Chinese and Buddhist thought.

[63] See H.-J. Uther, *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification* (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2004), which lists the Grateful Dead (ATU 505) in which a hero is aided by the ghost of a corpse he has helped; a son's quest for a father's healing (ATU 551); dragon-slaying (ATU 300) and, finally, the tale-type in which part of a dragon's body such as the heart is used for healing (ATU 305).

[64] Uther, *The Types of International Folktales*, 291-93.

[65] Levine, 'Diaspora as Metaphor', 117 (18).

[66] Bow and Nickelsburg, 'Patriarchy with a Twist', 128-34 (50-55).

Kathleen Corley has observed that 'meal practices are the most conservative aspects of society; they often maintain and stabilize social systems, rather than change them'.[67] The use of consumption in the book as a whole functions in a similar way, that is, to maintain and stabilize the story's structure and to convey the important theme of righteousness at the same time. This effect is compounded by the fact that the *Tobit* narrative itself is very conservative, emphasizing the transfer of wisdom from one generation to the next as well as strict adherence to Israelite traditions. A tale that is preoccupied with the instruction of a young man is unlikely to see women as other than secondary, even if they are mentioned. For these reasons, it makes sense that, despite their prominence in *Tobit*, women and girls remain secondary to and extensions of the male characters.

When one compares the book with other examples of ancient Jewish fiction in which women feature, one finds that there is a direct relationship between female agency and the presence of female consumption. In the *Additions to Esther* (both the Alpha-Text and the OG with slight variations) and *Judith*, as in *Tobit*, that a woman does not eat is in high relief.[68] By contrast to Tobit, however, such food refusal is not merely part of the personal arena, but is linked to piety in terms of dietary regulations and fasting. The way that the food consumption of these women is portrayed echoes the way that they are actively involved in saving their people from danger, with Judith being more active than Esther. When Judith, who normally fasts most of the time, switches into active mode, her eating habits change too. There is a detailed list of all the food she brings to the Assyrian camp, and her eating and drinking play a prominent role in her encounters with Holofernes.[69] Although Judith herself has been seen as a male fantasy,[70] it is notable that what this protagonist does with food nonetheless reflects her active role. And looking back, one finds that *Ruth* is concerned with female consumption not only in the contexts of famine and harvest, but in such explicit scenes as 2.9 and 2.14, which refer to Ruth's potential thirst and her eating her fill.

In the short story of *Susanna*, however, the relatively passive title character — who does not save herself but is saved by Daniel — is never seen eating, even though her would-be rapists mention lunch (Sus. 13). However, Aseneth's importance as an active character is readily undergirded by a study of her consumption, which goes beyond the famous honeycomb episode and includes, for instance, her enjoyment in looking at food on her parents' table as well as her

[67] Corley, *Private Women, Public Meals*, 25.

[68] Esther C.28 to Greek Esther B-Text; Jdt. 8.6; 10.5; 12.1-4.

[69] Jdt. 10.5; 12.1-4.

[70] See, for instance, the discussion in Wills, *Jewish Novel*, 142-46.

dramatic dinner tossing scene.[71] While one cannot mistake female agency in a narrative for a genuine understanding of female viewpoints, it appears that the other narratives mentioned correlate consumption with agency. It may therefore not be surprising that Hannah, whose fasting is the only reference to female consumption in *Tobit*, is also the female character with the greatest degree of agency.

In studying female consumption in *Tobit*, it seems that it is not enough for a female character to talk or even to talk back; if she does not eat, certain realms of the story are inherently closed to her, including the physical level, the level of the story's deep structure and, in some respect, the spiritual level (righteousness).[72] Above all, the decisive absence of a woman or girl eating anything denies female characters their full humanity. To reframe Descartes, 'I eat, therefore I am'.

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[71] *Aseneth* (long version): 16.1-16; 4.2; 10.13. I follow Wills (*Jewish Novel*, 177-79) in regarding *Aseneth* as at least partly Jewish, with two layers in the current versions of the story.

[72] These three levels may overlap with each other. For example, observing dietary laws takes place in the physical realm yet connects with spirituality.

Chapter 6

Food and Death: An Autobiographic Perspective on *Tobit* according to One Woman's Binge-Eating Disorder

Helen Efthimiadis-Keith

Introduction

The book of Tobit (henceforth, *Tobit*) is replete with images of food and death, from Tobit's participation in Jerusalem's sacrificial cult/feasts in ch. 1 to the death of Tobias in ch. 14.[1] In fact, the motifs of food and death are most often intertwined, either implicitly or explicitly. Implicitly, the sacrifices offered are animals/food ritually slain (1.5),[2] slain animals/food are consumed during the feasts (1.6) and the burials of Tobit, Anna, Raguel, Edna and Tobias (14.1, 12-14) are undoubtedly followed by feasts, according to the customs of the time. Explicitly, Tobit leaves his Shavuot meal to tend to the body of a slain Israelite (2.3-8), Raguel prepares a grave for Tobias immediately after the wedding feast

[1] Similarly N.S. Jacobs, '"You Did Not Hesitate to Get Up and Leave the Dinner": Food and Eating in the Narrative of Tobit with some Attention to Tobit's Shavuot Meal', and J. Bolyki, 'Burial as an Ethical Task in the Book of Tobit, in the Bible and in the Greek Tragedies', both in *The Book of Tobit: Text, Tradition, Theology* (ed. G.G. Xeravits and J. Zsengellér; JSJSup, 98; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 121-38 and 89-101 respectively; N. MacDonald, 'Food and Drink in Tobit and other "Diaspora Novellas"', in *Studies in The Book of Tobit: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (ed. M. Bredin; LSTS, 55; London: T&T Clark International, 2006), 165-78; B. Ego, 'The Figure of the Angel Raphael according to his Farewell Address in Tob 12:6-20', in *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings — Origins, Development and Reception* (ed. F.V. Reiterer, T. Nicklas an K. Schöpflin; Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook, 2007; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 239-54; B. Ego, 'Death and Burial in the Tobit Narration in the Context of the Old Testament Tradition', in *The Human Body in Death and Resurrection* (ed. T. Nicklas, F.V. Reiterer and J. Veheyden; Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook, 2009; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 87-103.

[2] I use Di Lella's verse numbering and translation throughout unless otherwise indicated. However, I retain the more conventional rendition of characters' names, except when quoting directly from his text (A.A. Di Lella, 'Tobit', in *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* [ed. A. Pietersma and B.G. Wright; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 456-77).

(8.9-12) and various parts of a slain fish/food are used to heal Tobit and Sarah of their several afflictions (6.7-9; 8.2-3; 1.7-8, 10-15).[3]

These connections between food and death — a small selection of the many in *Tobit* — simply beg exploration. While I have already published the results of such an exploration in a traditionally cerebral article,[4] that publication was motivated by an intensely personal, emotional-spiritual and physical dilemma, namely Binge-Eating Disorder (BED). In fact, I felt compelled to analyze *Tobit* according to my BED experience from the moment that I first noticed the connection between food and death in the book. As such, that previously published article was preceded by my autobiographic reading of *Tobit* according to BED,[5] a disorder in which food and death are combined in various ways.

In the present study I should like to honor the original impetus for my published research. In so doing, I will modify my original reading in a number of ways: (a) I will present it from a more feministically orientated perspective in keeping with the ethos of this volume; and (b) I will shorten it considerably to meet this volume's spatial requirements, focusing only on the character of Tobit. Even so, I will retain my original autobiographical stance as this approach is highly germane to feminist interpretations.

I begin by locating my reading within a feminist, autobiographical approach; continue by discussing briefly the features, causes and effects of BED as I have experienced them; and turn to the feminist aspects of BED. I then read *Tobit* from a BED perspective. Having done so, I conclude with an evaluation of the work produced and its effect on me.

Feminism/Feminist Interpretations and Autobiographical Approaches to Biblical Texts

Feminist and womanist scholars have long argued for the inclusion of autobiographic categories in academic research/writing as a way of breaking the hegemony of androcentric readings of the Bible.[6] Such categories necessarily

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[3] Similarly Jacobs, '"You Did Not Hesitate"', 121.

[4] H. Efthimiadis-Keith, 'The Significance of Food, Eating, Death and Burial in the Book of Tobit', *Journal for Semitics* 22.2 (2013), 553-78.

[5] H. Efthimiadis-Keith, 'Fish, Food and Death: An Autobiographical Perspective on Tobit according to One Woman's Binge-Eating disorder' (2013). This keynote address was delivered at an international conference titled 'Body, Psyche and Space in Old Testament Apocryphal Literature', held at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa, 13–17 July 2013.

[6] See, e.g. Y. Abrahams, 'Learning by Doing: Notes towards the Practice of Womanist Principles in the "New" South Africa', *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity* 50 (2001), 71-76 (73); and S. Nadar, 'Toward a Feminist Missiological Agenda: A Case Study of the Jacob Zuma Rape Trial', *Missionalia* 37.1 (2009), 85-102.

include personal experiences and emotions — that oft-feared 'womanly' capacity — and 'uncomfortable' details which show that 'we do not interpret in a *personal* vacuum'.[7] Rather than compromise the academic rigour of our discipline,[8] personal experience and emotion make explicit the relationality of the interpretative endeavor. They also open the text to a multitude of meanings, and narrow the gap between the 'ordinary' reader and the 'expert' biblical scholar.[9]

While the value of autobiographic approaches to biblical texts has been richly demonstrated in various volumes published in recent years,[10] it would seem that a clear methodology is yet to emerge. This is not surprising, as autobiographic criticism is a highly individual and often very risky endeavour.[11] How then does one render 'an explicitly autobiographical performance *within the act of*

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[7] H. Efthimiadis-Keith, 'Judith, Feminist Ethics and Feminist Biblical/Old Testament Interpretation', *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 138 (2010), 91-111 (110); reproduced in this volume under the title 'Judith, Feminist Ethics and Feminist Biblical/Hebrew Bible Interpretation', 141-63 (161).

[8] See D. Patte, 'Can One Be Critical without Being Autobiographical? The Case of Romans 1:26-27', and J.L. Staley, 'What Is Critical about Autobiographical Biblical Criticism?', both in *Autobiographical Biblical Criticism: Learning to Read between Text and Self* (ed. I.R. Kitszberger; Leiden: Deo, 2002), 34-59 and 12-33. According to Patte, one cannot be critical without being autobiographical, as 'pre-understandings' that are largely based on autobiographic/'subjective' concerns are part of the 'hermeneutical cycle' involved in Bible interpretation (Patte, 'Can One Be Critical', 34). Similarly, Staley ('What Is Critical') locates the critical nature of autobiographical biblical criticism in three spheres drawn from dictionary definitions of 'critical' and related concepts: (a) it is 'relat[ed] to, or a turning point or a specially important juncture' for biblical criticism (15-17), (b) it is '[willing] to give flesh and blood names to the dis-ease of our scholarship and to our situatedness in the world' (19), and (c) 'there is evidence in autobiographical criticism of an approach that exercises or involves careful judgment or judicious evaluation' (23).

[9] Efthimiadis-Keith, 'Judith', 110 (141 in this volume). According to D. Patte, we need to examine our exegetical practices and discover how and to what extent they may be hurting others (*Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: A Re-evaluation* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995], 9).

[10] To the best of my knowledge four such volumes have been published to date: I.R. Kitzberger, ed., *The Personal Voice in Biblical Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 1998); J.C. Anderson and J.L. Staley, eds., *Taking It Personally: Autobiographical Biblical Criticism* (Semeia, 72; Atlanta: SBL, 1995); Kitzberger, ed., *Autobiographical Biblical Criticism*; P.R. Davies, ed., *First Person: Essays in Biblical Autobiography* (BibSem; London: T&T Clark International, 2002).

[11] 'What is at stake in personal voice criticism is nothing less than the self of the critic… By exposing oneself the critic makes herself/himself vulnerable, and that is always a risky endeavor' (Kitzberger, *The Personal Voice*, 5).

criticism'[12] without turning it into a solipsistic endeavour? How does one go about '*illustrat[ing] analytic insights* through recounting [one's] own experiences and thoughts as well as those of others'[13] and 'openly discuss changes in [one's] beliefs and relationships'[14] over the course of researching and writing without it becoming a bare-it-all enterprise akin to some modern TV talk and reality shows? I believe that this can be done by keeping closely to the biblical text, taking cognizance of other readings of it, using 'the tools of our trade' and locating oneself firmly in the largely 'amorphous social world'[15] of a particular community of readers — in my case, that of BED sufferers.

With that in mind, I turn to my reading of *Tobit*. I will use the past tense to refer to my experiences, since the conference paper on which it is based was composed more than a year ago and BED is, thankfully, largely a thing of the past for me.

First Impressions

As I sat down to write the conference paper, my mind raced and I found myself physically gravitating towards the kitchen.[16] I had written fervently about the necessity of openness in academic discourse, about the fallacy of objectivity,[17] but I was not sure whether I had the courage to write an autobiographic piece that investigated the association of food and death in *Tobit* in light of my perilous relationship to both these entities. The possibility of sharing this relationship with an academic audience that might not be inclined to listen to

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[12] P.J.W. Schutte, 'When They, We, and the Passive Become I: Introducing Autobiographical Biblical Criticism', *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 61.1-2 (2005), 401-16 (401, my italics).

[13] L. Anderson, 'Analytic Autoethnography', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35.4 (2006), 373-95 (384, my italics).

[14] Anderson, 'Analytic Autoethnography', 384.

[15] Anderson, 'Analytic Autoethnography', 379.

[16] A recent study conducted among 33 women who fulfilled the clinical criteria for BED found that the greatest percentage of binges took place in the living room (30.7%) and the kitchen (31.1%) (R. Stein, J. Kenardy, C. Wiseman, J. Dounchis, B. Arnow and D. Wilfley, 'What's Driving the Binge in Binge Eating Disorder? A Prospective Examination of Precursors and Consequences', *International Journal of Eating Disorders* 40.3 [2007], 195-203 [198]). In my case, the overwhelming majority of the binges took place in the kitchen. For the characteristics of BE (binge-eating) and BED see W. Johnson, K. Boutelle, L. Torgrud, J. Davig, and S. Turner, 'What Is a Binge? The Influence of Amount, Duration, and Loss of Control Criteria on Judgments of Binge Eating', *International Journal of Eating Disorders* 27.4 (2000), 471-79.

[17] Efthimiadis-Keith, 'Judith', 141-63 in this volume.

my musings and the possible ramifications of doing so boggled my mind... I nervously swallowed my last piece of gluten-free bread with jam... Still, this risk somehow seemed necessary.

Pondering how to go about it, I resolved *not* to suppress the voice of my mounting anxiety — after all, autobiographic biblical criticism is about *not* suppressing the personal voice in favor of a fallaciously objective third-person one.[18] I therefore began investigating the feelings underlying my anxiety, excited by the potential healing it would bring.

Tobit and Me

The next morning I was ready to proceed with my work. I was excited about discovering the feelings behind my desire to BE the previous day: I had anticipated abandonment (everyone will laugh at me and leave me) and so, in my panic,[19] reached out for food to still the panic and numb myself to the upsurge of negative thoughts/feelings attending it.[20]

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[18] Academic language has traditionally required researchers to use the first-person plural or third-person constructs in relation to themselves. This practice, as well as the use of passive-voice constructions, has contributed to the de-personalization of research and the concomitant objective fallacy (see Schutte, 'When They', 403; and Kitzberger, *The Personal Voice*, 2).

[19] 'Research has consistently shown that anxiety disorders [and depression] are common among individuals with eating disorders' (T. Sawaoka, R.D. Barnes, K.K. Blomquist, R.M. Masheb and C.M. Grilo, 'Social Anxiety and Self-Consciousness in Binge Eating Disorder: Associations with Eating Disorder Psychopathology', *Comprehensive Psychiatry* 53 [2012], 740-45 [740, 744]). In a recent study, Sawaoka *et al.*, 'Social Anxiety' (743-44), 'examined correlates of social anxiety and self-consciousness in [113] overweight and obese men and women with BED. Social anxiety was significantly associated with higher levels of overall eating disorder psychopathology including shape and weight concerns and binge eating frequency.' Social anxiety is defined as 'a lack of confidence in social situations, difficulty interacting with other people, and fear of negative evaluations from others' (Sawaoka *et al.*, 'Social Anxiety', 740). For further discussions on the relationship between anxiety, distress and BE, see C.M. Grilo and M.A. White, 'A Controlled Evaluation of the Distress Criterion for Binge Eating Disorder', *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 79.4 (2011), 509-14 as well as E.F. Harrington, J.H. Crowther, H.C.P Henrickson and K.D. Mickelson, 'The Relationships among Trauma, Stress, Ethnicity, and Binge Eating', *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 12.2 (2006), 212-29.

[20] As Harrington *et al.*, 'The Relationships', 214-15 have noted, BE is often used to escape the painful feelings associated with traumatic and/or stressful events. According to the American Psychiatric Association (APA), *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders: Fourth Edition (DSM-VTM)* (Washington, DC: APA, 2013), 351, 'The type of food consumed during binges varies both across individuals and for a given individual'.

Over the years, I have realized that each BE event was a micro-suicide[21] filled with negative affect such as self-pity, not unlike Tobit's suicidal prayer in ch. 3. He too felt abandoned: abandoned by his God, his people and his wife; abandoned and blind, despite having 'earned his salvation' by being good. Like a little child, he blamed himself and his wrong-doing (sin) for his experience, and attempted to justify the Father/father who had perceivably abandoned him (3.2 and 5):

> [2] You are righteous, O Lord,
> and all your deeds are righteous,
> and all your ways are mercy and truth;
> you judge the age...
> [5] And now your many judgments are true
> In doing with me according to my sins,
> because we did not keep your commandments
> and did not walk truthfully before you.

Looking beyond the book's supposedly 'deuteronomic' outlook,[22] I wondered why Tobit would resort (or, perhaps, even revert) to such a negative portrayal of himself and his God in that moment of personal crisis. For me, the answer lay in the pain, alienation and abandonment he had experienced throughout his life (see Tob. 1–2).

Tobit's father died in succession of his mother when he was (presumably) young, leaving him in the hands of his grandmother (1.8). My children's experience regarding the death of their father had shown me that intense feelings of abandonment and alienation may result from the loss of a parent, and that those feelings may lead to potentially alienating activities and behaviours. Paradoxically, alienating behaviors were often combined with attempts to re-establish belonging.

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[21] See E. Svirko and K. Hawton, who indicate that there is a strong association between self-injurious behaviours and eating disorders: 'Self-Injurious Behavior and Eating Disorders: The Extent and Nature of the Association', *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior* 37.4 (2007), 409-21.

[22] As S. Weeks, 'A Deuteronomic Heritage in Tobit?', in *Changes in Scripture: Rewriting and Interpreting Authoritative Traditions in the Second Temple Period* (ed. H. von Weissenberg, J. Pakkala and M. Marttila; BZAW, 419; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 389-404, indicates, recent scholarship on *Tobit* 'has become dominated by a paradigm of the book as a quintessentially Deuteronomic work'. However, I would agree with him that ascribing *Tobit*'s views to 'Deuteronomism' involves an 'oversimplification of Tobit itself' (390, see also p. 391). While Tobit's presentation of his situation certainly has a 'deuteronomic' flavour, the book draws on so many different strands of biblical literature — e.g. the patriarchal narratives in Genesis, prophecy and wisdom — that any 'Deuteronomic heritage...jostles for space among many other concerns' (Weeks, 'A Deuteronomic Heritage', 402).

Turning to Tobit, I saw that, subsequent to his parents' death (we cannot know how much time elapsed) he 'alone' of all his kindred and tribe worshipped God in Jerusalem throughout the days of his youth (1.6). The text would like to portray his devotion as heroic — he braved the ire and scorn of his tribe to worship God as and where God had wanted to be worshipped (1.4-6). In other words, the text would like to indicate that Tobit identified with God despite any alienation that he might have faced. For me, however, his behaviour denoted his deliberate alienation of his wider kinship group. At the same time, Tobit attempted to identify with God and the people of Jerusalem by giving more than he was required to give in alms and for the welfare of the priests in Jerusalem, helping disenfranchised Israelites and those who had 'attached themselves to the sons of Israel' in any way he could (1.6-8). From my perspective, these activities represented Tobit's attempt to identify with the Father/father and, possibly, to assuage any childhood guilt that may have resulted from the death of his parents.

The alienation-identification pattern established in his youth continued when Tobit was married and deported to Nineveh. According to his report, he alone (implied) followed the Jewish dietary rules, he alone (implied) gave alms to the poor and buried Israelites whose corpses were thrown over Nineveh's walls or deliberately left uninterred (1.9-1, 16-18).[23] While God seemingly rewarded him for his good deeds (1.12-15), a 'certain one of the people' of Nineveh betrayed his burial activities to the Assyrian power and he was forced to flee for his life (1.19). He lost everything apart from his wife and son (1.20).

Upon being re-instated to his former position (1.21-22), Tobit continued with his good deeds. He interrupted his Shavuot meal to wait for his son to bring a faithful but disenfranchised Israelite to the table and then buried the corpse of an unnamed Israelite that had been thrown into the marketplace (2.1-4). While burial of the dead was regarded as the ultimate good deed,[24] Tobit did not

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[23] 'To be unburied was the ultimate disgrace' (J. Davies, *Death, Burial and Rebirth in the Religions of Antiquity* [London: Routledge, 1999], 103). It was 'the ultimate degradation for the people of the Ancient Near East, it being proof of abandonment by both humanity and the gods' (21). For ancient Israelites, it signified being 'totally cast out, both out of the company of men (born and unborn) and out of the company of God. It [was] the punishment for only the greatest of sins', as can be seen from Lev. 10.1-6 (99). By leaving Israelites unburied and, moreover, forbidding their countrymen (and others) from burying them, the Assyrians were not only showing them the ultimate disdain but also casting them out from the community of humans and God. For further discussion of this matter see Bolyki, 'Burial as an Ethical Task', 89-90, and Ego, 'Death and Burial', 90.

[24] Kindness towards the dead was regarded as the true or ultimate kindness because the doer could expect no good from the beneficiary of her/his good deed. See I. Abrahams, 'Tobit and Genesis', *JQR* 5.2 (1893), 348-50 (349) and Ego, 'Death and Burial', 88-89.

receive the 'ultimate' reward — blessing in this life — for his efforts.[25] On the contrary: he was blinded (1.9-10) and found himself in the patriarchally unenviable position of having his wife support him (1.11). He felt powerless, abandoned and alienated (see 1.10). No wonder his view of himself and of his God was so negative. No wonder he was 'grief-stricken in spirit' and prayed, with 'groaning' that God would do him the ultimate good of taking his life (3.3-6).

Having completed his prayer, Tobit left the courtyard and re-entered his house (3.16). I wondered whether he might have been searching for a means of self-soothing, possibly through food, to mitigate his extreme distress. He had shown himself capable of eating under acute emotional strain just hours before his prayer (2.5): he had left his Shavuot meal without eating anything in order to lay out an Israelite corpse, and had then proceeded to complete his meal — albeit with 'mourning' (2.5).[26] If he could eat after such an emotionally difficult event, it was possible that his Shavuot meal may have functioned — in part, at least — as a mode of self-soothing. Assuming that, it became conceivable that Tobit might have uttered his anguished prayer and had subsequently entered his house in the hope of assuaging his fear and anxiety through food or other means.

Moreover, reclining for his Shavuot meal (2.1) was Tobit's first (reported) activity after his return to Nineveh. It felt to me that he could not wait to eat now that he had ceased fleeing for his life. Furthermore, food is so pervasive, so structurally significant in *Tobit*,[27] and the Shavuot meal is related with such relish and with such emphasis on 'how much of a sacrifice leaving the meal was

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[25] Both Tobit and the angel highlight benefits of alms-giving/doing good in this world: success in all one's ways and 'good counsel' from the Lord (4.7), protection from evil (14.7), cleansing from sin and enjoying life to the full (14.9).

[26] A number of scholars use this incident as proof that Tobit was a man who could keep his passions in check with regard to eating: he leaves a sumptuous meal in order to lay out a corpse. For example, Jacobs, '"You Did Not Hesitate"', 128 states that this act shows that Tobit 'is true to his upbringing (continuity) in his ability not to let food prevent him from attending to more important matters'. She then concludes that '[f]ood...becomes a way for Tobit [to] highlight his virtues which now (explicitly or implicitly) include not only a single-minded attention to charity but a firm control over his appetite' (135). For more on Jacobs' views, see her contribution to this volume, 78-98.

I would agree that, for Tobit, burying the dead is more important than eating. For me, however, this does not prove that he was 'true to his upbringing' or that he was able to reign in his passions. It merely shows that his obsession lay elsewhere, namely in doing good. This obsession made it easy for him to abandon his food in favor of good works and to take it up again once the good deed was done. See further my arguments regarding Tobit's obsession with good works in the next section, entitled 'Tobit's Family and Me'.

[27] Jacobs, '"You Did Not Hesitate"', 123, 137-38.

on Tobit's part'[28] that I could not help entertaining the possibility that Tobit might have had a relationship with food that went beyond cultural norms.[29] I wondered whether he had been a large (overweight) man or whether he might have become overweight in response to his blindness. The way that the joyous Shavuot meal was turned into mourning made me think of how the joy of life is sapped by addiction and BED… I felt for him.

Tobit's Family and Me

On the same day as the previous section was written, I was stunned by a comment in my Bible reading plan.[30] The comment briefly described addiction and the effect that it has on the addict's family. The prayer, particularly its last sentence, pierced my soul:

> Lord… Remove from my life those things that separate me from you and keep me from experiencing healthy relationships with others.[31]

Surprised, I reasoned that it could not be a coincidence that I was reading this commentary at this time. Apart from the fact that I was examining my BED (food addiction) anew, I was also trying to improve the quality of my relationship with my children, and possibly 'get' them 'a new daddy' as they had requested many a time. Moreover, I had read two articles the previous night that had not praised Tobit for doing good.[32] Those articles suggested that there was something obsessive, even self-destructive in Tobit's good deeds and that he committed them with no thought about their effect on others.[33]

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[28] Jacobs, '"You Did Not Hesitate"', 133.

[29] As L. TerKeurst, *Made to Crave Devotional: 60 Days to Craving God, Not Food* (Zondervan; Kindle edn, 2012), 32, indicates, gluttony has become acceptable for many people today, even among Christians. However, gluttony was severely frowned upon in antiquity (V.E. Grimm, *From Feasting to Fasting: the Evolution of a Sin* [New York: Routledge, 1996], 98-100, 126-29).

[30] American Bible Society (ABS), 'Restart: Compassion and Justice', available online at https://www.youversion.com/users/helenkeith/ reading-plans/494-restart-compassion-and-justice?day=17 (accessed 4 September 2013). The website www.youversion.com offers a number of reading plans that the reader can follow on a day-by-day basis. Some are thematic, as is the one I have referred to above, while others are simply plans to read through a particular book or section of the Bible over a prescribed period of time.

[31] ABS, 'Restart'.

[32] Weeks, 'A Deuteronomic Heritage', and G. Miller, 'Raphael the Liar: Angelic Deceit and Testing in the Book of Tobit', *CBQ* 74.3 (2012), 492-508.

[33] Weeks, 'A Deuteronomic Heritage', 393.

The synchronicity[34] of it all astounded me, filling me with the terror of knowing that God was involved in my situation and that the BE would therefore come to an end. As time passed, I began to realize that the cause of my terror was the fear of no longer having an excuse to eschew 'meaningful relationships', particularly with men. At the same time, I craved deep, nurturing relationships. The resultant tension drove me to the kitchen many a time over the next two weeks.

My ruminations caused me to consider the effects of Tobit's incessant do-goodery on his family. While his perseverance in doing good, particularly in burying the dead, might be seen as a manifestation of his piety and faithfulness, for me, there was something compulsive about his behaviour, something diseased.[35] He seemed so obsessed with his doing good that he could see little else, let alone the needs and deeds of his own immediate family. I wondered what Anna and Tobias were doing while Tobit was feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and burying the dead. Did they live in terror while he was out stealing the bodies of the slain and burying them (1.17-18)? How did they experience his fleeing for his life and their subsequent loss of all worldly goods (1.19-20)? Did they panic when Tobit left during 'his' Shavuot meal to tend to the dead yet again (2.1-4)? Was Tobit even aware of their plight? For me, he was not. Rather, he behaved quite like an addict who was so fixated on her/his addiction that she/he could see little else.

First, as previously indicated, Tobit seemed completely obsessed with doing good. He did not stop even on pain of death and was ridiculed by his neighbors (2.8) because of it.

Second, up to the end of his prayer in ch. 3 (3.6), the narrative is written wholly *about* Tobit and from *his* point of view.[36] It concerns *his* faithfulness, *his* good deeds, *his* marriage to Anna, *his* siring of Tobias, *his* exile, *his* fear and flight from Nineveh, the confiscation of *his* goods (with the exception of *his* wife and *his* son, 1.20) and so forth. It is as though he alone were exiled, as though he alone did good works, as though he alone suffered. Apart from reporting on his altercation with Anna (2.11-14), and the birth and naming of his son (1.9), Tobit largely discounted his family. He was clearly self-absorbed.

Third, his obsession and self-absorption are clearly portrayed in his first altercation with Anna (2.11-14): he refused to believe the truth she told him in favour of his own fabrications. He was convinced — for no apparent reason — that the goat she had brought home was stolen, and her honest explanation that

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[34] As R.S. Schellenberg ('Suspense, Simultaneity, and Divine Providence in the Book of Tobit', *JBL* 130.2 [2011], 313-27 [320-24]) indicates, synchronicity is a strong feature of *Tobit*.

[35] Similarly Weeks, 'A Deuteronomic Heritage', 393.

[36] S. Van Den Eynde, 'One Journey and One Journey Makes Three: The Impact of the Readers' Knowledge in the Book of Tobit', *ZAW* 117.2 (2005), 273-80 (276).

the goat was given to her as a gift in addition to her wages, did nothing to pacify him. He refused to believe her and angrily insisted that she returned the kid. No wonder she retorted, 'Now where are your acts of charity? Where are your righteous deeds? See, these things are known about you' (2.14).[37]

Fourth, Tobit's self-absorption and his lack of faith are evident in the scene where Tobias introduced him to Azariah, the healing angel in disguise. Here, in response to Azariah's joyful greeting, Tobit lamented his fate self-pityingly (5.10): he stated that he had nothing to be joyful about and that he existed as a dead person among the living because he could no longer see 'the light of heaven' and could only hear people but not see them. He expressed no joy in the fact that he *could* hear and that he had a wife who had risked her honour to support him (2.11-12) as well as a growing son who was eager to do his will (see, e.g. 4.3 and 5.1, 4) and clearly cared for him (9.1-4; 10.7-8; 11.10-13 and 14.11, 13). He also brushed aside Azariah's encouragement that the time was near for God to heal him, and instead turned the discussion to travel and wage arrangements (5.10).[38]

Fifth, in the same scene, Tobit appeared more interested in (read: obsessed with) Azariah's familial pedigree than he was in the latter's knowledge of the road ahead. He pressed Azariah for an answer regarding his family and tribe (5.11-12) but neglected to question him about his knowledge of the dangerous terrain to be covered.[39] The mention of Hannaniah's name so excited Tobit that he simply accepted Azariah's claims without further scrutiny. He was 'so overjoyed at meeting a cousin that he forgot about his more immediate relations'. He thus showed that he valued 'extended kinship more dearly than near kinship'.[40] All things considered, I had to agree with Miller:

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[37] B. Bow and G.W.E. Nickelsburg ('Patriarchy with a Twist: Men and Women in Tobit', in *'Women Like this': New Perspectives on Women in the Greco-Roman World* [ed. A.-J. Levine; SBL Early Judaism and its Literature, 1; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991], 127-44 [136]; in this volume, 3-22) render Anna's last phrase as follows, 'Now we can see what you are', which confirms my reading of Tobit as a self-absorbed man, more concerned about doing good deeds than about his own family. While Bow and Nickelsburg correctly identify Tobit's portrayal here (Tob. 2.11-14) as negative versus the positive portrayal of Anna, many other scholars interpret the figure of Anna and her words in 2.14 rather negatively. They believe that her words mock (Bolyki, 'Burial as an Ethical Task', 100) or taunt (Ego, 'The Figure of the Angel', 240) Tobit, or that she is being petulant (H. St John Thackeray, 'Tobit', in *A New Commentary on Holy Scripture: Including the Apocrypha* [ed. C. Gore, H.L. Goudge and A. Guillaume; New York: Macmillan, 1936], 42-58 [46]). I would disagree with the readings of Bolyki, Ego and St John Thackery (above). For me, Anna was merely telling Tobit the truth, awakening him to the discrepancy between his do-goodery and family relationships.

[38] Miller, 'Raphael the Liar', 503. See also Van Den Eynde, 'One Journey', 276.

[39] Miller, 'Raphael the Liar', 504.

[40] Miller, 'Raphael the Liar', 506.

> Tobit is a negligent father who sends his only son on a perilous journey with a man who claims without proof to be related to him, who claims without proof to know the way, and who gives false assurances about the safety of a route that Tobit knows full well is dangerous.[41]

Sixth, Tobit was more concerned about money than he was about his son's welfare. For me, as for Miller, his pre-occupation with money was evident at the end of ch. 4, where he told Tobias about the money he had left in Rages with Gabael:

> Over the span of five verses (4:20–5:3), Tobit mentions money…four times. By contrast, he mentions only once that his son should find a trustworthy…guide (5:3). The emphasis should have been the other way around.[42]

It would seem that money and lineage were at the top of Tobit's list of priorities, and not his son. No wonder, then, that when Tobias departs with Azariah, Anna all but directly accuses Tobit of caring more for money than he does for his own son (5.18-20).

It was clear to me, at this point, that Anna was more concerned about Tobias's safety and more cognizant of his intrinsic value than Tobit was. She also trusted more in God's providence than did Tobit. Contrary to Tobit, Anna was thus both physically and spiritually sighted: her priorities were ordered aright whereas Tobit's were not.[43]

Finally, for me, Tobias came across as a little too young or, rather, a little too immature for a young man of marriageable age: he did not seem to be able to 'connect the dots' very well. For example, the angel explained the uses of the fish's liver, heart and gall (6.8-9), but Tobias did not immediately relate the latter to his father, or the former to Sarah, whereas he was cognizant of the affliction of each (6.14-15). Similarly, a little later, when Raphael tried to convince him to marry Sarah (6.10-13), Tobias objected on account of her death-dealing demonic problem (6.14-15). It seems that he had forgotten that he already had the remedy (6.8)![44] Given the above, I wondered whether Tobit spent enough time with his son so as to contribute positively to his formation as a man, or whether a possible lack of input on Tobit's part contributed to the immaturity seen in Tobias.

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[41] Miller, 'Raphael the Liar', 505.

[42] Miller, 'Raphael the Liar', 505.

[43] Miller, 'Raphael the Liar', 506.

[44] I. Nowell, 'The "Work" of Archangel Raphael', in Reiterer, Nicklas and Schöpflin, eds., *Angels*, 227-38 (230).

When viewed together, the seven points mentioned clearly show that all was not well in Tobit's household: he was essentially neglectful of his immediate family in favor of himself, money, extended family, the poor and the dead. Tobit's spiritual blindness, namely his obsession with doing good/right, his self-absorption and his wrong priorities, had twice brought him into conflict with at least one family member, namely Anna (2.11-14 and 5.18-22). The same blindness had caused him to discount his immediate family on more than one occasion, and possibly contributed to his son's immaturity.

Therefore, it should perhaps come as no surprise that Raphael declared, retrospectively, that he had been sent to *test* Tobit (12.13-14, my italics):

> [13] And when you did not hesitate to get up and leave your dinner and when you went and buried the dead, [14] *then I was sent to you to test you.* And at the same time God sent me to heal you and Sarah your daughter-in-law.

The wording of 12.14 clarifies that Raphael's mission was first to test[45] Tobit and then to heal him and Sarah 'at the same time'. How did Raphael test Tobit? He offered him misinformation concerning his kinship ties and his familiarity with the terrain of Tobias's journey. Why did he test him? To 'uncover two things about Tobit's character: his faith in God's providence and his priorities as a father'.[46] Indicatively, Tobit's abandoning of his Shavuot meal is given as the immediate impetus for the testing, as it is in this meal that Tobit demonstrated most clearly his prioritization of his dead, extended family (the Israelites) over his immediate, living family.

Clearly, Tobit had dismally failed the angel's test. Still, I did not think that Tobit was a bad man or that he was wilfully neglectful of his family. As I understood it, Tobit withdrew from and so neglected his immediate family as a result of his own great internal pain. This pain manifested in his failure to connect deeply with those closest to him, perhaps for fear that they too would die and abandon him as his father, mother and possibly his grandmother had done. He focused on himself and his good works as this was all that he had, all that he could really control, all that could not be taken away from him. I saw in Tobit a picture of myself — eating and working in an attempt to control at least some aspects of my life — and I did not like it...

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[45] By contrast, Ego, 'The Figure of the Angel', 247, opines that the test probably refers to Tobit's blindness. However, as Miller ('Raphael the Liar', 502) states, Tobit's blindness is 'part of the impetus for Raphael's being sent in the first place', so it is unlikely that it would be the test.

[46] Miller, 'Raphael the Liar', 493.

However, in spite of Tobit's self-absorption, there was also good news: God had heard Tobit's (and Sarah's) prayer and dispatched His healing angel, Raphael, to heal him (and Sarah, 3.16-17). While Tobit remained unaware of this fact until the end of the tale (12.6-15, especially vv. 11-15), it seemed to me that his first encounter with the angel (ch. 5) had begun to change his outlook on life: he used the phrase 'in good health' six times (5.14, 17, 21, 22) from the time that he encountered the angel to the time that Raphael and Tobias departed on their journey. It was also no coincidence that Tobit was portrayed as playing a more compassionate role towards his immediate family from then on: twice he comforted his weeping wife concerning Tobias's safety (at the beginning and towards the end of the latter's journey (5.18-22; 10.4-7), and he also showed genuine concern for his son (10.1-3). Moreover, once his eyesight was restored, his first act was to 'embrace Tobias and bless God because he saw his son once again, not because he had acquired much property'[47] or regained the money he had left in trust with Gabael (8.9; 10.10; 11.12-15). In fact, the topic of money did not surface at all until Tobias brought it up (11.15). Even then, Tobit showed no interest in the money 'but immediately goes out to meet Sarah at the city gate before she arrives and welcomes her as a family member. He calls her "my daughter" four times in one verse (11:17).'[48] Later, after the wedding feast, Tobit was willing to give half of his new-found fortune to Azariah for all that he had done (12.1-4), thus demonstrating once again that the family has become more important to him than money.[49]

Tobit's obsession with doing good suffered the same fate as his pre-occupation with money: he did not speak of almsgiving again until his dying exhortation to Tobias and Sarah (14.8-9), even though the angel commanded him and Tobias to give alms (12.8-9) and the narrator reports that he continued to do so until he died (14.2). Significantly, there was not a dead body in sight until Tobit died 'in peace at one hundred and twelve years' — sixty-six years after he was first blinded — and was 'buried with honor' in Nineveh (14.2).

Tobit's preoccupation with lineage and extended family also ceased after his sight was restored. As Miller indicates, Tobit 'focuse[d] all his energy, attention, and affection on those dearest to him',[50] which now included Sarah.

Finally, Tobit had come out of his house — the last narrative space in which he had been located (5.9, 17). Metaphorically, he had come out of spiritual darkness into the light, which also translated into his coming out of physical

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[47] Miller, 'Raphael the Liar', 506.

[48] Miller, 'Raphael the Liar', 507. These four instances counterbalance the four references to money that Tobit makes in 4.20–5.3.

[49] Miller, 'Raphael the Liar', 507.

[50] Miller, 'Raphael the Liar', 507.

darkness. He had embraced life. He had passed the angel's test, and could now finally 'see' his family. His self-absorption had been broken, his ailing family connections had been restored and he once again believed in the providence of God. No wonder his prayer of lamentation (3.1-6) had turned into an exaltation of joy (11.14-18; 12.22; 13.1-18; 14.2).

Seeing Tobit's transformation gave me hope. I could also change. With God's help I could beat my addiction and restore ailing family relationships.

Closing Remarks: Conclusion and Evaluation

As I concluded the original version of this conference paper, I was blessed by yet another synchronic event. My first pastor, Vic Klackers, had just posted the following on his Facebook (FB) wall:

> God makes everything come out right; he puts victims back on their feet. He showed Moses how he went about his work, opened up his plans to all Israel. God is sheer mercy and grace; not easily angered, he's rich in love. He doesn't endlessly nag and scold, nor hold grudges forever. He doesn't treat us as our sins deserve, nor pay us back in full for our wrongs. As high as heaven is over the earth, so strong is his love to those who fear him. Psalm 103:17. MSG; The LOVE OF OUR DEAR GOD IS SO STRONG towards those of us who fear and LOVE HIM!!

For me, the first and third sentences summed up an important aspect of *Tobit*'s message. Those sentences also summed up a large part of my experience while I was writing the paper. Furthermore, Klackers's FB post caused me to remember the many times when God had put the broken pieces of my life together in His mercy. I had almost forgotten those.

Significantly, I binged less and less as the paper came to a close, though the urge to binge was very strong at times. My relationship with my children also improved as I came to experience greater peace. However, I fell in and out of BE and obsessive behaviour many a time after that. While BE is mostly a thing of the past with me at present, and my relationship with my children has improved drastically, I know that there is still work to be done.

Writing this study has benefited me both as a person and as an academic. It is my first attempt at autobiographical biblical criticism. The result, I will venture, has complied with all three aspects raised in Schutte's work: autobiographical biblical criticism renders 'an explicitly autobiographical performance within the act of criticism'.[51] This essay and the conference paper which preceded it have been autobiographical; have a keen element of performance (more evident in my

[51] Schutte, 'When They', 401.

reading of the conference paper); and contain what I would regard as sound scholarly criticism. But have I contributed to a fresh scholarly understanding of *Tobit*? Or, have I merely 'flown the kite'?[52]

I believe that my paper/essay has indeed made a scholarly contribution to *Tobit* studies in and through the autobiographical context from which it has emanated. My addiction to food has allowed me to see how addicted Tobit was to his good works, while the pain driving my BE behavior has caused me to search *Tobit* for possible sources of his pain. The result has been a counter-textual reading — one that reads against the overt grain of this text that appears to portray Tobit in a very favourable light. My reading has nuanced and compassionately rendered Tobit's obsessive behavior in a way which I have not seen done in other scholarly works. At the same time, I find that my reading has indeed been feministically orientated: it has read against the grain of the text, intertwined scholarly commentary with the 'womanly' categories of experience and emotion and it has provided a personal account of the feminist issue that BED is and other eating disorders are. Moreover, I believe that my reading has contributed towards the scholarly community gaining a better understanding of the emotional and relational affects attending BED as well as the patriarchal strictures underlying modern women's pre-occupation with thinness.

Finally, I have enjoyed writing this essay, despite the risks involved, and I hope that readers will enjoy reading it just as much. I also hope that other women (and men) would find courage to deal with the issues underlying personal addictions and unhealthy relationships as they read it.

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[52] Once, when I was stressed about a sermon I had to prepare, my friend, Rev. Peter Wyngaard, told me that there are two types of sermons: the one keeps closely to the text it interprets, while the other 'flies the kite'. The latter, he explained, picks up on certain words or phrases and expounds them in ways that do not always keep the parent text in mind. An example of this is J. Staley, 'Fathers and Sons: Fragments from an Autobiographical Midrash on John's Gospel', in Kitzberger, ed., *The Personal Voice*, 65-85. Staley quotes a number of verses from *John*, after each of which he provides autobiographical details such as the mole on his daughter's left buttock (70, 71, 82) and his vasectomy (75-77). As fascinating and creative as his article is, it is difficult to determine what these events have to do with the verses in question, as he makes no attempt to integrate his autobiographical details with a scholarly understanding of the biblical text.

Part 2

What Can We Do with Judith?

CHAPTER 7

WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH JUDITH? A FEMINIST ASSESSMENT OF A BIBLICAL 'HEROINE'*

Pamela J. Milne

Introduction: One Judith and Another

Once upon a time, a young academic named Judith wanted to learn the oral history of a major development which had occurred in her field some decades earlier. She decided to invite four prominent senior scholars (all male), knowledgeable about this oral history, to dinner at a local restaurant. All accepted her invitation and Judith proceeded to make the necessary arrangements and reservation. The four men and Judith arrived at the restaurant at the appointed time and were shown to their table by the maître d'. As the group arrived at the table, it became apparent that it was a table for four, not for five. Before anyone could draw the problem to the attention of the maître d', one of the men mused (in all seriousness), 'Oh, what shall we do with Judith?' Immediately, Judith stepped up behind one of the four chairs and said, 'Why don't we put her here!'

When I began to think about *Judith* and to read numerous feminist analyses of the story, my academic colleague's experience came to mind again. The more I reflected on her experience, the more it provided insight for me into aspects of the biblical story of Judith I found problematic as a feminist reader.

For one thing, Judith's dinner experience with her four male companions confirmed that, no matter how central a woman might be to the action of the plot, she can remain marginal relative to the dominant male perspective. Judith had conceived the idea of an oral history session; she had decided on a list of participants; she had invited them to dinner; she had done all the organization; and she was paying for the dinner. Nevertheless, she was perceived by her guests as the one lacking a place at the table. The question, 'What shall we do with Judith?' classified the actors in the drama in terms of 'us' and 'her' clearly along gender lines. It rendered Judith anomalous and marginalized in her own play.

Our modern Judith, being the quick-witted feminist that she is, was able to reclaim her place immediately. She highlighted and undercut the gender division

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by speaking of herself as an object in the third person while asserting her subjectivity by placing herself within her male colleague's 'we': 'Why don't we put her here!'

As an actor in the drama, Judith was able to respond as she did, but would the same thing be possible for a narrative character like the biblical Judith? Like my colleague Judith, in the company of four men, the biblical Judith appears as the sole active and named female character among Jewish leaders and elders and foreign generals and soldiers. How does she fare in such a context? Is she controlled by the author/narrator of the story (by the text) or by the reader who reads her story, or by both? Is she a feminist character or can she be seen as one by a feminist or pro-feminist reader? Or is she a character who embodies a thoroughly patriarchal idea and/or ideal of woman?

Biblical Texts and Interpretations: The Dilemma for Feminist Readers

It is virtually axiomatic in feminist circles that the bible has played a significant role in the oppression of women in Western society. Nineteenth-century American feminists lobbying for women's suffrage often found themselves confronted by opponents who used the bible as the principal weapon in their war against equal rights for women. As a result, several prominent feminists devoted considerable intellectual energy to studying what the bible had to say about women, and how it was used against women, while they worked for political change.

For many, such as Lucy Stone, Antoinette Brown and the Grimke sisters, Sarah and Angelina, their feminist activism was deeply rooted in their religious beliefs. They shared the conviction that inaccurate translations and biased interpretations produced by male clergy, not the biblical text itself, were the source of the bible's oppressive impact on women. However, others, like Matilda Joslyn Gage[1] and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, were convinced that the problem went beyond sexist interpretations of the bible to the biblical text itself. By the end of the nineteenth century, long before the advent of structuralism, poststructuralism or postmodernism, a feminist biblical criticism had emerged which made the bible and its interpretation a political issue.[2]

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[1] Matilda J. Gage, *Woman, Church and State* (repr., Watertown, MA: Persephone, 1980).

[2] Lois W. Banner, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton: A Radical for Woman's Rights* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1980); Carolyn De Swarte Gifford, 'American Women and the Bible: The Nature of Woman as a Hermeneutical Issue', in *Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship* (ed. Adela Yarbro Collins; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 11-33; Miriam Gurko, *The Ladies of Seneca*

Feminist biblical criticism seems to have faded early in the twentieth century shortly after the publication of Cady Stanton's *The Woman's Bible*.[3] It began to reappear in the 1960s and had become a vital and energetic pursuit by the mid-1970s. Most of the studies produced during this period proceeded from the assumption that, for the most part, the patriarchal or misogynist bias of readers/interpreters had produced anti-woman interpretations not well rooted in the biblical text. The early work of Phyllis Trible[4] is typical of this approach. Trible argued that 'the intentionality of biblical faith...is neither to create nor to perpetuate patriarchy but rather to function as salvation for both men and women...'[5] Through close readings of individual texts such as Genesis 2–3, using the techniques of rhetorical criticism, Trible sought to recover the liberating intention of the biblical authors and to challenge the misinterpretations produced by male readers over the centuries.

In the 1980s feminist scholars began to express more doubts about rescuing the 'intentionality' of all biblical texts from the charge of sexism and misogyny. Scholars like Esther Fuchs[6] began to explore the subtle literary devices and strategies through which biblical texts gave expression to the patriarchy of Israelite and/or Christian societies. Even Trible turned her attention to a group of biblical texts which narrated stories of such horrific acts of terror against women that no feminist reading could reclaim them as positive, liberating texts for women.[7] When confronted with narratives about the rape, mutilation and murder of women, Trible's strategy as a reader was to focus on the female victims of violence and to identify with them in memoriam to them.

Feminist biblical scholarship, like much other biblical scholarship, has shifted focus somewhat in the last few years from historical and theological questions about authors and their intentions toward more literary questions about texts

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Falls: The Birth of the Woman's Rights Movement (New York: Schocken, 1976); and Dorothy C. Bass, 'Women's Studies and Biblical Studies: An Historical Perspective', *JSOT* 22 (1982), 3-5.

[3] Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and the Revising Committee, *The Woman's Bible* (repr., Seattle, WA: Coalition Task Force on Women and Religion, 1974).

[4] Phyllis Trible, 'Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation', *JAAR* 41 (1973), 30-48; Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978); Phyllis Trible, 'Eve and Adam: Genesis 2–3 Reread', in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion* (ed. Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow; New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 74-83.

[5] Trible, 'Depatriarchalizing', 31.

[6] Esther Fuchs, 'The Literary Characterization of Mothers and Sexual Politics in the Hebrew Bible', in Collins, ed., *Feminist Perspectives*, 117-36; Fuchs, '"For I Have the Way of Women": Deception, Gender and Ideology in Biblical Narrative', *Semeia* 42 (1988), 68-83; and Fuchs, 'Marginalization, Ambiguity, Silencing: The Story of Jephthah's Daughter', *JFSR* 5 (1989), 35-45.

[7] Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984).

and readers. The work of Mieke Bal, who analyses biblical texts as a narratologist, has been especially influential at the theoretical level. As a literary theorist, Bal is acutely aware of current interest in the question of the reader and the reader's role in the production of meaning. Bal's own position is one which holds the text and the reader in tension. In her understanding of narratology, meaning is a readerly product but is based on an elaboration of the possibilities of the text.[8] Drawing on the work of Ernst van Alphen,[9] Bal holds that meaning is a dynamic process comprised of two 'moments'. The text is the provider of meaning in the first moment, while in the second moment, 'the reader formulates an ordering and reworking of the collection of possible meanings offered by the text'.[10]

What interests Bal most, especially when dealing with a religious document like the bible, which has been and continues to be used to shape social reality in the Western world, are the ethical responsibility for, and the political consequences of, reading. The central issue is one of power. On the one hand it makes a difference whether the reader is a woman, black, poor and/or old, or a man, white, middle-class and/or middle aged. White, middle-class, middle-aged men have dominated the reading of biblical texts to the virtual exclusion of others whose readings have been regarded as marginal or deviant. On the other hand, even when women become readers of the bible, they find biblical texts more disturbing because of the distribution of power in the text's 'pre-text', the historical, biographical, and ideological reality from which the text emerges.[11] For Bal, neither the text nor the reader is innocent.

Holding both the text and the reader accountable for meaning, as Bal attempts to do, would appear to be a very useful political strategy for feminists to adopt when dealing with the bible. Holding the text accountable will allow us to understand the multiple ways it has promoted and continues to promote the denigration and oppression of women. Holding the reader accountable will help us ensure that 'normativity' of white, middle-class, middle aged, male interpretations no longer goes unchallenged.

The following examination of *Judith*, and in particular of its central female character, attempts to adopt a politicized feminist stance which holds both reader and text accountable for meaning. It does so by first assessing recent studies of the narrative character, Judith, in light of the concept of feminism and

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[8] Mieke Bal, 'Introduction', in *Anti-Covenant: Counter-Reading Women's Lives in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Mieke Bal; Sheffield: Almond, 1989), 11-24 (17).

[9] Ernst van Alphen, *Bij wijze van lezen: Verleiding en verzet van Willem Brakmans lezer* (in Dutch; Muiderberg: Coutinho, 1988).

[10] Bal, 'Introduction', 14.

[11] Bal, 'Introduction', 14, 16.

sexual politics espoused by the reader/interpreter. It then moves to the text and asks what expectations are created for the reader by the genre of the story, and how these expectations affect the degree to which Judith can be expected to function in a positive way for women.

Judith in Recent Feminist Interpretation

Judith is generally dated to the last third of the second century BCE and is thought to have been written by a Palestinian Jew, probably a Pharisee. For a variety of reasons, it was included in the Septuagint but not in the Hebrew canon.[12] A central motif in this apocryphal text, the killing of an enemy general by a woman, seems to have been modeled on parts of the Jael and Deborah stories in Judges 4–5.[13]

The story has a literary setting several hundred years earlier than its date of composition. It takes place in the time of Nebuchadnezzar who is depicted as the king of Assyria, not of Babylon. This, and numerous other historically inaccurate details, led most scholars since the Reformation to read Judith as a fictional story, not as an historical record.

As a story, *Judith* is quite good, having high drama, intrigue, suspense and a lot of sexual innuendo. The character, Judith, who is regarded by most interpreters as the story's heroine, does not make an appearance until ch. 8, half way through the book. She enters the story at a crucial point when the people of her town, Bethulia, are about to surrender to the Assyrian forces led by Holofernes. Judith, a pious, beautiful and religiously observant widow, convinces the town officials not to surrender until she has had an opportunity to work on the problem. On the pretense of wanting to assist the Assyrians, Judith is able to infiltrate the enemy camp. She wins the confidence of the general who is captivated by her beauty and intends to sexually seduce her. Judith avoids falling prey to Holofernes' seduction, decapitates him while he is in a drunken stupor and safely returns to Bethulia. The demise of their leader causes panic to spread among the Assyrian forces, with the result that the Israelites are able to attack and destroy them.

The obviously dangerous and daring role played by Judith in delivering Israel from the threat of annihilation has drawn the attention of many feminist and pro-feminist analysts interested in the depiction of women in the biblical

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[12] Carey A. Moore, *Judith: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 40; New York: Doubleday, 1985), 67-71, 86-93.

[13] Sidnie Anne White, 'In the Steps of Jael and Deborah: Judith as Heroine', in *'No One Spoke Ill of Her': Essays on Judith* (ed. James C. VanderKam; Early Judaism and its Literature, 2; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 5-16.

tradition. What I find particularly noteworthy is the diversity to be found in their assessments of the character of Judith with respect to whether she represents a positive or negative depiction of, and model for, women. Some find in the story as a whole, and in the character of Judith, very positive, strongly feminist elements; others are positively disposed to the story but are more cautious about the extent to which they would identify feminist elements; still others find the story not only not feminist but dangerously patriarchal, and Judith a classic femme fatale, not a feminist heroine.

The two most positive assessments of Judith come from George Nickelsburg and Carey Moore. Both men have described Judith as a feminist heroine in a feminist story. The strongest statement is from Nickelsburg who concluded that:

> The book of Judith is especially striking for its feminism. In creating a protagonist the author has chosen a woman, who calls to mind the Israelite heroines of the past — Judith — 'the Jewess'. As the narrative unfolds, Judith is consistently depicted as superior to the men with whom she is associated: Uzziah and the elders; the Assyrian army and their general.[14]

Nickelsburg concedes that 'some passages seem to be saying that God's power is operative through the weakest of human agents, that is, a woman'; and that her 'use of deceit and specifically of her sexuality may seem offensive and chauvinistic', but contends that for the author of Judith it is just the opposite.[15]

In a similar vein, Carey Moore, in his major commentary on the book, has a section entitled, 'The Heroine's Character'. Two thirds of this section are devoted to a review of interpretations on *Judith*, ranging from the early church fathers to moralists of Victorian England. He demonstrates that the Judith character has always given rise to divergent, even conflicting assessments. Clement of Rome, for example, praised Judith as a brave and godly woman, while men like Tertullian and Ambrose were impressed by her self-imposed celibacy. 'Clearly', Moore writes, 'Judith was their type of woman'. But it was a different matter for the values and priorities of Victorian England. Moore quotes Edwin Bissell's views that Judith's character is not simply objectionable from a literary point of view, but even more so from a moral standpoint. 'Clearly', Moore writes, 'Judith was not Bissell's kind of lady'.[16] Moore's own view is that *Judith* takes a 'pro-feminist stance' and this may provide a partial explanation for the work's exclusion from the canon by men who found it too radical.[17] In

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[14] George Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 108.

[15] Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 108.

[16] Moore, *Judith*, 64-65.

[17] Carey A. Moore, 'Why Wasn't the Book of Judith Included in the Hebrew Bible?', in VanderKam, ed., *'No One Spoke Ill of Her'*, 61-71 (65).

support of this, Moore quotes approvingly from Patricia Montley, who regards Judith as the archetypal androgyne who embodies, yet somehow transcends, the male/female dichotomy. According to Moore, what makes Judith's androgyny so unusual and fascinating is that her

> 'masculinity' and 'feminity' [*sic*] are sequential rather than simultaneous. That is, as a widow she is asexual; in Bethulia with the elders, Judith plays the man; in the Assyrian camp, she acts the woman until she resumes her manly role by cutting off Holofernes' head; then back in Bethulia she continues to act the man until the defeat of the Assyrian army, after which she reverts permanently to the asexuality of her widowhood.

Moore concludes, again quoting Montley, that Judith is 'the feminist's kind of person', because she is 'a heroine who rises above the sexism of her author's culture'.[18]

While Nickelsburg and Moore are not known as feminist scholars, though both may endeavour to incorporate the results of feminist scholarship in their work, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza is a leading feminist biblical scholar. She, too, views Judith in a very positive light and quotes approvingly the passage by Nickelsburg cited here. According to Schüssler Fiorenza, the book is a heroic biography built on feminist irony which highlights Judith's guileful remarks, her enticing beauty and her treacherous planning. Judith, herself, is 'a woman who fights with a woman's weapons, yet far from being defined by her "femininity", she uses it to her own ends'.[19]

A somewhat more reserved, but nonetheless positive assessment of this story, can be found in the writings of scholars such as John Craghan and Toni Craven. While not arguing that Judith is either a feminist heroine or a feminist's heroine, they argue that there are at least elements in the story and/or the character of Judith that may be viewed positively by feminists.

For Craghan, Judith (along with Esther and Ruth) provides us with a paradigm for human liberation.[20] Liberation in *Judith*, he claims, means the de-deification of Nebuchadnezzar, accomplished by Judith, a female warrior. Judith 'sets out to rescue the male, using the most effective weapon, viz., beauty'.[21] The sexual element is more pronounced in the *Judith* story than in either *Esther* or *Ruth*. Craghan argues, however, that even in *Judith* the sexual element is not there for its own sake but rather is subsumed under the category of liberation.

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[18] Moore, 'Why', 65.

[19] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her* (New York: Crossroads, 1984), 117.

[20] John Craghan, 'Esther, Judith and Ruth: Paradigms for Human Liberation', *BTB* 12 (1982), 11-19.

[21] Craghan, 'Esther, Judith and Ruth', 13. It is not clear whether the male to which Craghan refers is the male deity, Yahweh, or the male community, Israel. I think it is the latter.

'In Judith', he writes, 'the sexual element is so pronounced because it is the military weapon'.[22] In his concluding comments, Craghan develops this theme of sexual violence further. He says that:

> Even as a guest, one can be and is expected to employ violence. In terms of sexual qualities they must be exploited to the full since they are the weapons par excellence.[23]

Toni Craven's primary interest is in the rhetorical structure of *Judith* and her major contribution was to show the structural unity and intricate literary design of the text. But, as a feminist, Craven is also interested in the image of woman projected by the character, Judith. Like Moore, she thinks at least one reason for the book's exclusion from the canon was the radicalness of its central female character. She speculates that, had the gender of Judith and Achior been reversed, the book would have had a much better chance of being included in the Hebrew canon. However, despite the fact that her own study of *Judith* has identified occasional breaks with patriarchy in the story, she concludes that it would be groundless to suggest that the author was an ancient feminist and she does not even raise the possibility that Judith could be considered a feminist character.[24]

The work of Amy-Jill Levine[25] moves another step away from identifying Judith as a feminist heroine. Levine still identifies Judith as a heroine but her Judith is far from a feminist heroine. She agrees with commentators who see Judith as a metaphor for the community of Israel, pointing out that elsewhere Israel is metaphorically represented by female figures such as the bride, the whore and the widow. With her name meaning 'Jewess' and her status as a widow, Judith seems to be a classic metaphor for the community. As the only named female character, she speaks and acts in the public sphere, and seems to relativize the normative cultural constructions of the community, especially the construction of the role of women within it.

But, as a woman, Judith remains Other, both to the male-defined world and to women within it. Her very public activity creates a crisis in the world of Israelite patriarchy. According to Levine, Judith:

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[22] Craghan, 'Esther, Judith and Ruth', 17.

[23] Craghan, 'Esther, Judith and Ruth', 18.

[24] Toni Craven, *Artistry and Faith in the Book of Judith* (SBLDS, 70; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 117, 121-22.

[25] Amy-Jill Levine, 'Sacrifice and Salvation: Otherness and Domestication in the Book of Judith', in VanderKam, ed., *'No One Spoke Ill of Her'*, 17-30. Also in *A Feminist Companion to Esther, Judith and Susanna* (ed. A. Brenner; FCB, 7; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press), 208-23. Given page numbers for citations are from the original 1992 edition.

> ...endangers hierarchical oppositions of gender, race, and class, muddles conventional gender characteristics and dismantles their claim to universality, and so threatens the status quo.[26]

Judith, she claims, 'transforms the social roles of the Israelite women' who 'like the sword-brandishing (Jdt. 13:6-8) and head-bearing (13:15) Judith, become both graphically and by their actions phallic women'.[27]

To alleviate this crisis for patriarchy Judith must be reinscribed into the androcentric norm. By the end of the story this has happened. Levine shows how the narrative, in its final form, constrains, contains, domesticates and renders Judith *kosher*. Judith represents Israel, but only incompletely. Her role as protector-avenger is a male role according to Israelite social norms and she makes this clear by identifying with her male ancestor, Simeon, in her reference to the story of the rape of Dinah in Genesis 34 (Jdt. 9.2-4). This, according to Levine, renders her unable to represent Israel fully and certainly unable to represent Israelite women. 'Were Judith fully to embody Israel', she argues, 'then the traditional representation of the deity as the (male) savior of the female-figured community would be challenged. Were all women to be like Judith, not only Holofernes would lose his head.'[28]

Through this separation of Judith from corporate Israel and from Jewish women, Levine argues, the 'text's patriarchal ethos' is preserved. Judith is returned to female normalcy through such moves as her return to the private sphere and resumption of the traditional wife/widow role, her submission to priestly ministrations and the relinquishing of her Assyrian booty.[29]

Before moving on to the next step in feminist analysis, we can reflect on the important change that has taken place in the years between Nickelsburg (1981) and Levine (1992) in the way the feminist question is addressed to this text. Nickelsburg's comment that the book is striking for its feminism assumes an understanding of feminism in which women are seen to be superior to men. Judith, he concludes, is consistently depicted as 'superior' to the men with whom she is associated. While it is true that such an understanding may characterize some forms of feminism, it is by no means the case that it characterizes all, or even most, definitions. More typically, feminism is defined in feminist literature in ways which emphasize the human equality of women and men and the need to make this equality a reality in social, political, economic and religious realms. Furthermore, Nickelsburg seems to equate a few non-stereotypical female behaviours with feminism, and interprets the stereotypical presentations of female deceitfulness and seductive sexuality as being virtual feminist tools.

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[26] Levine, 'Sacrifice and Salvation', 17.

[27] Levine, 'Sacrifice and Salvation', 24.

[28] Levine, 'Sacrifice and Salvation', 19.

[29] Levine, 'Sacrifice and Salvation', 19, 26-28.

Moore's interpretation (1985) is perhaps even more problematic than Nickelsburg's. One cannot really discern whether Judith is or is not Moore's kind of person. But, as was the case for Nickelsburg, we can know something about his understanding of feminism. For Moore, the book has a 'pro-feminist' stance and Judith is a 'feminist's kind of person' because she is not really a woman but an 'archetypal androgyne' who transcends masculinity and femininity, who begins and ends as an asexual and who merely 'plays' or 'acts' male and female roles in between. Whereas Nickelsburg might have found some support for his underlying notion of feminism as female ascendancy, Moore would be harder pressed to find any feminist theoretical support for his view, which seems to negate femaleness completely.

Needless to say, I am troubled by these views, both because of the assumptions they make about feminism and because of the conclusions they reach about what constitutes feminist writing and a feminist character. Schüssler Fiorenza's position (1984) is, therefore, also problematic for me, insofar as she accepts Nickelsburg's analysis. Beyond this, however, she appears to accept uncritically the idea that 'femininity', 'female beauty and behaviour' are a woman's weapons. She finds positive value in Judith's efforts to resist being 'defined by her femininity' and circumscribed by her 'female beauty and behavior'. These qualities are contrasted with Judith's 'intelligent wisdom, observant piety, shrewd observation and faithful dedication' which mark Judith's 'real power'. Schüssler Fiorenza intends to show the irony which can result when men underestimate women, but in doing so she reinforces a hierarchical dualism which separates femininity from intelligence and associates femininity with deceitfulness. If feminist irony does exist here, it has been lost on centuries of interpreters who have been more prone to seeing the patriarchal glee of a powerful enemy brought low by a mere woman. Craghan, for example, links his presentation of Judith as a female warrior,[30] whose sexuality is a military weapon, with the idea that powerlessness is 'God's most potent weapon'.[31]

I begin to be more comfortable with Craven's discussion of Judith (1983). Probably most women who attempt to be both feminists and biblical scholars have, at some time in their lives, hoped that some of the female characters in the biblical material would turn out to be feminist characters that provide positive images of and for women. But I agree with Craven that Judith is not, ultimately, a character who breaks the bounds of patriarchy. Personally, I would go much further than Craven to argue that we must not isolate fragments from this story

[30] The word 'warrior' is read as a masculine form here in the same way as are words like 'doctor' and 'professor' when modified by the adjective, 'female'.

[31] Craghan, 'Esther, Judith and Ruth', 18. See also John Craghan, 'Judith Revisited', *BTB* 12 (1982), 50-53.

and read them as feminist nuggets. By focusing on the occasional breaks in the boundaries of patriarchy we risk not seeing the price the female character might have to pay for such transgressions. Rather, we must carefully assess the impact of the whole book to determine what messages it conveys about women and femininity.

Levine's article (1992, reprinted 1995) provided a solid beginning for an overall assessment of the *Judith* story. She has shown us how dangerously patriarchal the Judith narrative really is and how narrative control is exercised over the central female character so that she cannot be a feminist's kind of person. Her study helps us to see the censure exercised toward challenges to patriarchally defined female roles and modes of femininity. Although Levine, herself, does not pursue this line of analysis, she does move us away from the 'quest for the feminist heroine' and toward a more critical feminist analysis of the whole text.

Betsy Merideth (1989) takes this kind of feminist analysis a step forward when she examines biblical representations of gender and the politics of sexuality in narratives about Delilah and Judith. Drawing upon the work of Mieke Bal, Merideth looks at how these two woman characters use their sexuality to harm a man. She argues that, even though Judith is presented as clearly on the side of God and has the reader's sympathy, and even though commentators tend to overlook her use of sexual deceit to focus on her chastity and valuable contribution to saving the nation, we cannot assume that the story of Judith is a positive one for women. In Judith, beauty and deceit go together so that, at one level, the story inevitably carries the clear message that a 'woman's beauty and sexuality are dangerous to men because women use their attractiveness to deceive, harm and kill men'. Even though Judith's behaviour has generally been interpreted positively by male interpreters, the story as a whole not only does not benefit women, it carries an anti-woman ideology, albeit one sublimated and domesticated because, according to Merideth, Judith kills with the approval of her community.[32]

I concur with Merideth's conclusions, except for her contention that Judith kills with the approval of her community. In fact, Judith receives the community's approval for her deed only after she has done it (Jdt. 13.20). Prior to that she has only the permission of Uzziah, the magistrates and elders to make an effort to deliver her town from the Assyrians (Jdt. 8.32-35). I would argue that the anti-woman ideology is sublimated and domesticated by having Judith kill Holofernes as an instrument of the deity. This renders her action not only approved by, but subordinated to, the control of the male deity.

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[32] Betsy Merideth, 'Desire and Danger: The Drama of Betrayal in Judges and Judith', in Bal, ed., *Anti-Covenant*, 63-78 (76).

The importance of Merideth's comments on the use of beauty and sexuality, however, cannot be emphasized enough. In Judith, beauty and deceit are fashioned into a woman's weapon against men so successfully that she appears to some as a female warrior. While this may not be problematic for the character herself, it has serious consequences for the image of women it projects, and, hence, for the impact it has on women. A woman's sexuality and physical beauty are not external to her person but integral to it. Therefore, when a woman's beauty is observed by men, or when a woman expresses sexual interest in a man who has been thoroughly schooled in the dangers of the femme fatale, there is inevitable ambiguity, to the detriment of women.[33] In each and every instance a man must determine whether he is encountering a woman as a 'woman' or a woman as a 'female warrior'.

Through the propaganda of the femme fatale/female warrior character, men are taught, above all, to fear women. The otherness of women is thereby emphasized and women become objects to be viewed suspiciously and trusted not at all.[34]

Leonard Swidler, one of the first pro-feminist commentators on the text, highlighted the problematic nature of the image of woman projected by Judith in concluding that:

> The moral of the Book of Judith is not that women are good creatures of God, but rather that God is so great that he can bring good out of evil; not that women are to be valued greatly, but rather that God is so great that he can humble Israel's enemies even through the lowliest of instruments, women — and the weapon women use against men, beguiling beauty and sex.[35]

This theme has come to permeate Western culture, ironically obscuring the reality that men pose a much greater danger to women than women to men.

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[33] The 'female-warrior' text is not alone in making a problem out of women's beauty. In a discussion of wives in Gen. 10, 24, and 29, Ann Marmesh argues that not only must 'a woman's kinship status be the right balance between incest and exogamy; she must also be beautiful; so beautiful that she would cause trouble for her husband. A woman's beauty thus becomes a negative quality; a deficit akin to barrenness' (Anne Marmesh, 'Anti-Covenant', in Bal, ed., *Anti-Covenant*, 43-60 [51]).

[34] The theme of woman as a danger to men is central to several other isolated texts, such as the story of Jael, Delilah and Jezebel, as well as to the whole of the wisdom tradition from Proverbs to Ben Sira. An insightful presentation of the issue as it is expressed in Prov. 1–9 has been given by Yee: Gale A. Yee, '"I Have Perfumed My Bed with Myrrh": The Foreign Woman ('iššâ zārâ) in Proverbs 1–9', *JSOT* 43 (1989), 53-68. James Williams comments that Judith 'captivates Holofernes and the Assyrians in a fashion reminiscent of the wisdom tradition's warnings against the beauty and wiles of the temptress, the "alien woman"' (James G. Williams, *Women Recounted: Narrative Thinking and the God of Israel* [Sheffield: Almond, 1982], 78).

[35] Leonard Swidler, *Biblical Affirmations of Woman* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979), 114.

The Genre of the Judith Story and the Narrative Role of Judith

From the foregoing review it seems apparent that key assumptions about the nature of feminism and the politics of sexuality held by individual readers account in part for the diversity evident in scholarly assessments of the character, Judith. My own understanding of feminism differs greatly from that found in the works of Nickelsburg and Moore. It is one which insists on equity for women, while acknowledging women's concrete experience of oppression in a male-defined world. The ultimate goal of feminism, as I understand it, is to redefine and restructure society, and all its institutions, in ways which equitably reflect and sustain women's lives. I do not find the imagery of the femme fatale or the female warrior helpful in accomplishing this goal. For me, a feminist story would have to be one which promoted the equality of women, and a feminist character would have to be woman-centred and woman-defined.

When held accountable to this understanding of feminism, how does the story of Judith fare? The studies by Levine, Merideth and Swidler implicitly assert that the text itself does not allow the possibility of regarding either Judith or her story as beneficial for women. In the space remaining I want to extend their feminist-critical work on characterization and sexual politics by examining how genre contributes to the construction of the story's anti-woman ideology.

The role of genre analysis in the hermeneutical process has been addressed cogently in the work of Mary Gerhart.[36] Gerhart argues that reading is always reading as genre. Thus genric[37] considerations are indispensable for the interpretation of texts. Since different genres give rise to different kinds of expectations, genric competence, that is the ability of readers to construct, identify, compare, test, retrieve and critique genres, enables readers to render intelligible the relationships between their experiences and the textual forms.[38]

The question of the genre of *Judith* has been raised numerous times and many classification categories have been proposed.[39] Beyond agreement that the story

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[36] Mary Gerhart, 'Generic Studies: Their Renewed Importance in Religious and Literary Interpretations', *JAAR* 45 (1977), 309-25; Gerhart, 'Genric Competence in Biblical Hermeneutics', *Semeia* 43 (1988), 29-44; and Gerhart, 'The Restoration of Biblical Narrative', *Semeia* 46 (1989), 13-29.

[37] The adjectival form 'genric' is deliberately used rather than 'generic' because the latter has come to connote non-specificity and commonalty. Gerhart uses 'genric' to refer both to the taxonomic function of genre and to its productive function ('Genric Competence', 31, 41-42).

[38] Gerhart, 'Genric Competence'; 'Generic Studies', 310, 312-14, 318.

[39] See for instance Luis Alonso-Schökel, 'Narrative Structures in the Book of Judith', *in Protocol of the Eleventh Colloquy: 27 January 1974, The Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture* (ed. Wilhelm Wuellner; Berkeley, CA: The Centre for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture, 1975), 1-20.

is fictional, however, no consensus has emerged. Carey Moore[40] and Robert Doran[41] have summarized the proposals that include various types of apocalypse, novel and folktale. Both writers are inclined to think *Judith* is some form of folktale and both draw attention to the work of Mary P. Coote,[42] who classifies Judith as an epic rescue story, combining the folk motifs of the Faithful Wife/Widow and the Female Warrior. Moore prefers the classification 'example story' to Coote's 'epic rescue', while Doran simply notes that 'one might quarrel with Coote's classification' without specifying an alternate suggestion. Doran seems to think that further exploration of the 'traditional narrative qualities of the tale' is necessary before a more definitive classification can be made.[43]

The following analysis is an attempt to explore these traditional qualities and to evaluate Coote's suggestion that *Judith* is a form of the epic genre. Coote's approach to genre classification is that of theme/motif analysis, derived from western European folklore scholarship typified by the Finnish folklore school. This is the same approach to genre classification that influenced Hermann Gunkel and underlies biblical form criticism. In contrast to this, the approach adopted here will be based on an analysis of narrative surface structure. This approach is derived from the structuralist[44] work of the Russian folklorist, Vladimir Propp.[45]

Propp sought to classify folktales on the basis of the smallest structural elements that remained constant in tales of the same type or genre.[46] The two constant elements he isolated were 'functions' and 'roles'. A function is an act of a tale role defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action.[47] Functions and roles are abstractions that must be 'filled in' by concrete actions and characters. The role a character plays in a tale depends upon the functions she or he performs. The genre of a tale is determined by the particular set and sequence of functions and tale roles it employs.

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[40] Moore, *Judith*, 71-78.

[41] Robert Doran, 'Narrative Literature', in *Early Judaism and its Modern Interpreters* (ed. Robert Kraft and George Nickelsburg; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 287-310 (303).

[42] Mary P. Coote, 'Response', in Wuellner, ed., *Protocol of the Eleventh Colloquy*, 21-26.

[43] Doran, 'Narrative Literature', 303.

[44] Propp's opponents labeled his work 'formalist', a designation he categorically rejected in favour of 'structuralist': Pamela J. Milne, *Vladimir Propp and the Study of Structure in Hebrew Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 26-29, 96-104.

[45] Pamela J. Milne, 'Folktales and Fairy Tales: An Evaluation of Two Proppian Analyses', *JSOT* 34 (1986), 35-60.

[46] Milne, *Propp and the Study of Structure*, 67-88.

[47] Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), 21.

Propp, himself, described the narrative structure of only one folktale type, the heroic fairy tale. His model of this genre contains thirty-one functions and seven tale roles. Others have developed narrative surface-structure models of different genres. Two such models relate to the epic genre, Aleksandr Skaftymov's model of the romantic epic (Pre-Propp) and Heda Jason's model of the epic struggle.[48] If either of these models were able to describe or account for the structure of the *Judith* story, Coote's general epic classification would be corroborated, and a new perspective provided for a feminist assessment of the text.

Judith as a Romantic Epic

Skaftymov's model of the romantic epic was a precursor of Propp's heroic fairy-tale model and is considerably less detailed. It has only three tale roles and just eight 'episodes'.[49] Six of the episodes may be identified in the *Judith* story, although not in the sequence outlined by Skaftymov. Judith 1.1–7.18 presents the attack of the Assyrian forces, moving from the general attack on uncooperative vassal states to the specific attack on the Israelite town of Bethulia. In Skaftymov's model, this could be described as episode 2, the enemy attacks. In the romantic epic, the enemy's strength is often presented as 'superhuman' and in *Judith* there is repeated emphasis on the superhuman qualities of the Assyrian king (Jdt. 3.8) and on the immense power of the Assyrian forces (2.11, 28; 4.2).

The dispirited and dejected response of the townspeople of Bethulia to the Assyrian threat (7.19-32) corresponds to part of episode 3, in which the inhabitants and the ruler of a beleaguered city despair. But in *Judith*, only the inhabitants despair while the rulers still urge courage and confidence in God.

The introduction of Judith and the emphasis on her widowhood, a state which presumably increases the weakness she projects as a woman,[50] may constitute episode 1 in which the hero's initial weakness is described. In episode 4, the hero is called or arrives by chance to rescue the city. Judith takes up the challenge to 'deliver Israel' in Jdt. 8.9–9.14, but she neither arrives by chance nor is called. Furthermore, she does not present herself as the rescuer. Rather, it is the deity who will deliver Israel by her hand (8.33; 9.7-14).

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[48] Heda Jason, 'Ilja of Murom and Tzar Kalin: A Proposal for a Model for the Narrative Structure of an Epic Struggle', in *Slavica Hierosolymitana: Slavic Studies of the Hebrew University* (ed. L Fleishman, O. Romen and D. Segal; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1981), 47-55. See also Heda Jason, *The Fairy Tale of the Active Heroine: A Model of the Female Fairy Tale* (Jerusalem: The Israel Ethnographic Society, 1982).

[49] Propp used the term 'function' in place of the term 'episode'.

[50] Sandra Berg, *The Book of Esther: Motifs, Themes and Structure* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979), 150; Moore, *Judith*, 180.

Judith 10.1–13.10, where Judith goes to the enemy camp and succeeds in killing Holofernes, may be described as episode 5, in which the hero sets out against the enemy and vanquishes him single-handedly. Again, however, this identification is weakened by repeated claims that it is the deity, not Judith, who is primarily responsible for killing Holofernes (11.6, 16, 22; 12.4, 8; 13.4, 7). Similarly episode 8, in which the ruler rewards the hero, might be identified in 15.8–16.18; but here, too, there is confusion about who is rewarded for the victory, Judith or the deity.

At least two episodes in the romantic epic model do not appear to be evident in the story of *Judith*. These are episodes 6 and 7, in which a victorious hero returns home but the populace does not believe that he has single-handedly vanquished the enemy. The hero must convince the populace that he has done so. In the *Judith* story, the townspeople of Bethulia are amazed when Judith returns with the severed head of Holofernes but they do not express any disbelief. In fact, they immediately bow down to worship their god, proclaiming their belief that he has mortified the enemy (13.11-17).

Two of the three narrative roles in the romantic epic model can be filled easily and unambiguously with characters from the *Judith* story. The role of hero's adversary is played by the Assyrians, Nebuchadnezzar, Holofernes and his army, while the background roles are played by Uzziah, the elders and townspeople of Bethulia, Judith's maid, Manasseh, Joakim and the Israelite Council from Jerusalem.

It is more difficult to fill the hero role. At first glance, it appears Judith is the hero since she is the one who actually carries out the actions that lead to the defeat of the adversary. But she does not perform other functions ascribed to the hero, such as in episodes 6 and 7. Even when she does appear to perform the hero function, Judith claims not to, giving credit instead to the deity (9.7-14; 11.6, 16, 22; 12.4, 8; 13.4-7; 16.1-8). The people, too, credit the deity with the victory (13.17-19; 14.10). Given that the Assyrian king, Nebuchadnezzar, claims deity status for himself and that the ultimate military goal of the Assyrian army is to force all nations to worship their king as god (3.8), the main adversarial relationship appears to be between Nebuchadnezzar and the god of Israel. The deity, therefore, seems to fill the hero role better than Judith. If the deity is considered the hero, there is no suitable role left for Judith.

While the romantic epic model is useful for describing some aspects of the *Judith* story, it is not able to account well for the whole tale. Hence it seems unlikely that Judith belongs to the romantic epic genre, though it does exhibit some similarities to this literary type.

Judith as an Epic Struggle

Heda Jason's model of the epic struggle genre is much more complex than Skaftymov's and closer to Propp's in its design. It has nine roles and twenty-two narrative functions.[51] It is a model which accounts for three forms of epic struggle, namely, cosmic struggles, struggles against monsters and human struggles. Therefore, not all functions will be relevant to any one form.[52]

The core of the model is a struggle between a hero and an adversary. The struggle is often fought in two stages. In the first stage, the hero may lose to his adversary and then summon a weaker helper. One of the forms specifically mentioned by Jason has a male deity using the help of a female deity or human being. In the second stage, the adversary is overcome in a decisive battle with a helper's assistance.[53]

The general plot outline of *Judith* would appear amenable to an analysis with this model. If it is an epic struggle, it is one in the human, not the cosmic or monster, realm. Thus, functions 1 and 2, which involve a monster, will not be found. Function 3, initiative, is the first to occur. In this function, the adversary takes the initiative for a clash with the hero. This occurs in Jdt 2.1–3.9, when Nebuchadnezzar takes the decision to avenge those who refused to assist him in his war against the Medes. He commissions Holofernes, who sets out on a campaign against the western region, to make every dialect and tribe call Nebuchadnezzar god. Function 4, demand for surrender, is not made explicitly here but may be implicit in 2.10 and 2.21–3.9.

At the beginning of Judith 4, the Israelites learn of the horrors committed by the advancing Assyrian army, especially the sacking and destroying of sanctuaries (4.1). The Israelites, fearing both for Jerusalem and for the Temple of their god (4.2), prepare to resist the Assyrians (4.4-15). This may be described as function 5, the response to the demand for surrender. The Israelite resistance is of two kinds: military and religious. As part of their religious preparation, they beg the deity to protect them. This section, 4.8-14, could be described in terms

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[51] Narrative Roles: 1.1 Hero; 1.2 Hero's community; 1.3 Messenger A (community's messenger); 1.4 Helper A (hero's helper in battle); 1.5 Helper B (helper-seducer on behalf of the hero); 1.6 Messenger B (hero's messenger); 2.1 Adversary; 2.2 Creator of Adversary; 2.3 Adversary's following.

Narrative Functions: 1 Creation of monster; 2 Mission of monster; 3 Initiative; 4 Demand for surrender; 5 Response to demand for surrender; 6 Summoning; 7 Proposal for struggle; 8 Advice; 9 Response to advice; 10 Mission of seduction; 11 Attempt at seduction; 12 Seduction; 13 Preparation for encounter; 14 First encounter; 15 Defeat; 16 Council; 17 Search for help; 18 Cry for help; 19 Help 20 Second encounter; 21 Victory; 22 Triumph.

[52] Jason, 'Epic Struggle', 55.

[53] Jason, 'Epic Struggle', 47-48.

of Jason's functions 6, 8 and 9. Function 6, summoning, has messenger A summon the hero and/or the community. Here Joakim and the Council summon the community which, in turn, advises the hero to oppose the adversary, function 8. Function 9 occurs when the hero accepts the advice of the community to oppose the adversary. This function can be identified in 4.13 when the deity responds positively to the people's prayer. Function 8 may be repeated in 6.18-21, where the community of Bethulia urges the deity to oppose the adversary.

When Holofernes moves against Bethulia in Judith 7, functions 3, 4 and 5 are repeated. This time the response to the crisis is both negative and positive: the people want to surrender (7.23-28) but Uzziah wants to resist a little longer (7.30). Function 6 is repeated when Judith sends her maid to summon the three town elders (8.10) and function 5 is repeated when she urges continued resistance (8.11-17, 33).

In function 10, the community sends helper B, the helper-seducer, to seduce the adversary. This seems to occur when Judith volunteers her help and the elders accept her offer, though they are not aware of the particular means by which Judith will help (8.32-35). This is made clear only in ch. 9 and only to the reader, not to the community. In ch. 10, Judith prepares for her mission of seduction, while in chs. 11 and 12 she actually sets out on it. Function 11, attempt at seduction, seems appropriately applied to chs. 10–12.

Holofernes succumbs to the seduction, function 12, in Jdt. 12.16–13.4, and this leaves him vulnerable to a fatal attack by the hero through the hand of the helper, Judith. At this moment Judith again recalls that it is the deity who is about to use her hands to defeat the adversary (13.4-5). Then she moves to attack Holofernes (13.6-7). This can be both function 14, the first encounter between the hero and the adversary, and function 19, the helper extends help to the hero. In 13.8-10 the hero and helper overcome the adversary when Holofernes is decapitated and his head carried back to Bethulia. This is function 21, victory. The final function, 22, triumph, occurs in 13.14-20, when all the people bow down to worship their god, recognizing that he has defeated the enemy.

In the remaining chapters, functions 18-22 are repeated as Judith summons the men of Bethulia to help (Jdt. 14.1-4): they take up arms (14.11), attack and defeat the Assyrian army (15.1-7), and celebrate the deity's victory in worship (16.1-18). The Israelite men here fill the role of hero's helper in battle, helper A.

Jason's epic struggle model appears to account well for the plot structure in the Judith tale. The struggle revolves around the issue of who is god, the lord of Assyria or the lord of Israel. This issue is introduced in Jdt. 3.8 and repeated frequently through the story (e.g., 5.21; 6.11-21; 8.20; 13.17, 19; 14.10; 16.1-18). Jason's model also accounts well for the characters in the story, particularly for the deity and Judith. On the basis of this narrative surface structural analysis, therefore, the *Judith* story appears to resemble strongly the epic struggle genre.

Contribution to a Feminist Analysis

Understanding the roles individual characters play in the epic struggle genre provides us with another perspective from which to hold the text accountable with respect to the feminist or patriarchal meaning possibilities it promotes.

The application of both Skaftymov's and Jason's epic models to the text produced problems in assigning Judith the narrative role of hero. Using either model, the hero role was more easily assigned to the deity. This left Judith without a suitable role in the romantic epic genre, but in the epic struggle genre her actions related closely to the functions performed by the helper-seducer role.[54]

In the epic struggle genre, Judith is a central character whose actions are crucial to the plot action. But her narrative role is that of helper, not of hero. Separating the centrality of her actions from the role she plays allows for a more precise feminist critique. Being central to the plot is no guarantee that a female character's role will be woman-centred and woman-serving. Casting Judith in the role of helper-seducer, serving the interests of the male characters, is one of the effective literary devices through which the text's anti-woman ideology[55] is communicated.

Even though Judith may act in some atypical ways, she is not a counter-cultural character, but remains very much a man's woman. Her name may call to mind the Israelite 'heroines' of the past,[56] but Judith herself calls Israelite heroes to mind. She repeatedly identifies with male models like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Jdt. 8.26) and Simeon (9.2-4). Moreover, she identifies against female characters when she ignores the plight of Dinah and the Shechemite women who are victims of rape and when she eradicates their individual identities (9.2-4).[57] In short, the text presents Judith as the very antithesis of a woman-identified woman. Unlike our modern Judith at the dinner table, the character Judith in no way undercuts the gender division through her identification with male characters.

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[54] Coote ('Response', 23-25) had also assigned the hero role to male characters, the deity and the men of Israel, while Judith was assigned the role of female warrior who rescues the social group.

[55] Merideth, 'Desire and Danger', 76.

[56] Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 108.

[57] Levine, 'Sacrifice and Salvation', 18-19. Moore suggests that Judith speaks approvingly of Simeon's act because she found herself in a position analogous to Dinah's, namely, concerned about being raped. But her lack of concern for the Shechemite women seems to support Freedman's view that she is concerned not about being raped, but about killing Holofernes (Moore, *Judith*, 190-91).

Moreover, as a 'helper'[58] the Judith character effectively reinforces the patriarchal ideology that women are inferior and secondary by repeatedly making self-effacing, even self-denigrating, statements. Not only does she attribute all her success to the deity, as has been noted in the structural analysis, but she makes a point of emphasizing the negative attitudes held by her Israelite/Jewish society toward women. In Jdt. 9.9-10 she, not the narrator, draws attention to the added ignominy of being defeated by a woman. Lest the point be lost, it is repeated in 13.15 and 16.5. In these places she describes herself not as *gune*, 'woman', but as *theleia*, 'female', a term which Moore points out is less honorific and can be applied to animals as well as humans.[59] Along with this, Judith portrays her strategy against the enemy not in terms simply of clever outwitting but specifically in sexual terms with negative connotations: she uses the guile of her lips (9.10), a beguiling tongue (literally, 'a word and a deceit', 9.13), her face to trick (13.16) and her dress to beguile (16.8).

In short, Judith is presented and, as a narrative character, presents herself virtually completely from a male, patriarchal perspective. She is a pious helpmate to the male deity who uses her as a female instrument to defeat the enemy forces. This female instrument chooses to use her beauty and wiles, a potential danger to all men, only against non-Israelite men. Among Israelite men she remains the model of male-defined sexual propriety. Judith is a character who does heroic deeds, but she does so in the role of the hero's helper; and she does so in a way that represents the projection of a patriarchal stereotyped idea of a woman's dangerous sexual power. Because of this, she is a highly ambiguous character. On the one hand, the very fact that she is atypically active, for a female biblical character, leads some to see her as a feminist's kind of person. On the other hand, however, her very action is rooted in the dynamics of men's fear of women's sexuality and in the gender hierarchy that adds insult to the Assyrian injury.

So what shall we do with Judith? I would suggest that feminist readers reject any suggestion that she is a feminist heroine or a feminist's heroine. As a character Judith is, instead, a seductive helper who effectively promotes gynophobia, not equity, in a patriarchal narrative. Though she plays an important literary role in an epic struggle to liberate her people from the Assyrians, Judith liberates neither herself nor her countrywomen from the status quo of the biblical gender ideology.

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[58] David Clines, 'What Does Eve Do to Help? And Other Irredeemably Androcentric Orientations in Genesis 1–2', in *What Does Eve Do to Help? And Other Readerly Questions to the Old Testament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 25-48 (27-32).

[59] Moore, *Judith*, 193, 232, 248.

Chapter 7A

A Self-Response: What Would I Do with Judith Now?

Pamela J. Milne

The invitation to reflect on the views I expressed about the character, Judith, more than twenty years ago, came when such a reflection could hardly be more timely. Just days ago, a militant group identified as the *Islamic State* released a video of an American journalist, James Foley, being beheaded. The group said the beheading was in retaliation for American airstrikes in Iraq. A few days before this, an Australian man, allegedly a member of *the Islamic State in Syria*, posted images of his son holding the severed head of a Syrian soldier. Now, as I write, there is news of yet another beheading of an American journalist, Steven Sotloff. It is in this context that I reread my essay and thought about the story of Judith again.

A great deal more scholarship on *Judith* has been done in the interim. Some scholarship has focused on the text itself, including Judith as a character in the text, but there has also been much interest in examining how the story is reflected in art, literature, music and religious traditions.[1] One point on which there seems to be consensus in recent studies is that interpretations of both the book and the character have been remarkably diverse, if not polarized. Helen Efthimiadis-Keith expressed this assessment quite succinctly: '[i]t would seem that dichotomy and contradiction have plagued the history of research on every aspect of the book of Judith'.[2]

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[1] See, for example, Toni Craven, 'The Book of Judith in the Context of Twentieth-Century Studies of the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Book', *Currents in Biblical Research* 1 (2003), 187-229; Kevin R. Brine, Elena Ciletti and Henrike Lähnemann, eds., *The Sword of Judith: Judith Studies Across the Disciplines* (Cambridge: Open Book, 2010); Margarita Stocker, *Judith — Sexual Warrior: Women and Power in Western Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

[2] Helen Efthimiadis-Keith, 'Judith', 141 in this volume; originally 'Judith, Feminist Ethics and Feminist Biblical/Old Testament Interpretation', *Journal of Theology for South Africa* 138 (2010), 91-111 (91). Linda Bennett Elder talks about the 'disparate and contradictory interpretations' of the character, Judith (Linda Bennett Elder, 'Judith', in *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary* [ed. E. Schüssler Fiorenza; New York: Crossroad, 1994], 2:455-69 [456]); and Claudia Rakel notes that '[s]carcely another book of the Bible has experienced such an ambivalent reception history' (Claudia Rakel, 'Judith: About a Beauty Who Is Not What She

Several studies have surveyed feminist assessments of the character, Judith, and noted, as I did, that Judith has been seen as everything from a feminist heroine to a *femme fatale*. My discussion of Judith now appears in some of these surveys and is presented as one of the negative feminist assessments. Efthimiadis-Keith says that 'Milne…is perhaps the most negative'.[3] Indeed, my conclusion about the value of this male-constructed female character was negative. I did not find her to be, in any way, an appropriate positive role model for women. Today, that conclusion would remain negative. I am not convinced by efforts to cherry pick aspects of Judith's behavior and value them positively in isolation from the text's androcentric assumptions and patriarchal ideology. Such grasping at straws only seems necessary for recuperative confessional purposes.

If anything, my conclusion would be more negative. I would make my secular stance clearer and put more emphasis on the need to hold the biblical texts more accountable to contemporary ethical standards. When this is done, it inevitably exposes areas in which there are serious conflicts between the standards expressed in the bible and the standards of the modern world. Hector Avalos has called for the end of biblical studies because 'the Bible is the product of cultures whose values and beliefs…are no longer held to be relevant'.[4] He argues that biblical studies should now 'be geared toward helping humanity wean itself off the bible and toward terminating its authority completely in the modern world'.[5] This task is well suited to a secular feminist-critical approach to the bible. I agree with Esther Fuchs, who has argued that feminist biblical scholarship should be about 'a radical interrogation of biblical theology, biblical literary criticism, and biblical historical criticism'.[6] But I also think that there is a need to focus much more on how the bible is being understood by those outside the small circle of biblical critics and the even smaller circle of feminist biblical critics. In order to appreciate the seriousness of the conflicts between the values expressed in the bible and those of the modern world, many more people must be aware of what those conflicts are.

Pretends to Be', in *Feminist Biblical Interpretation: A Compendium of Critical Commentary on the Books of the Bible and Related Literature* [ed. Luise Schottroff and Marie-Theres Wacker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012], 515-30).

[3] Efthimiadis-Keith, 'Judith', 142 in this volume; originally 'Judith, Feminist Ethics', 98.

[4] Hector Avalos, *The End of Biblical Studies* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2007), 16.

[5] Avalos, *End of Biblical Studies*, 29.

[6] Esther Fuchs, 'Reclaiming the Hebrew Bible for Women: The Neoliberal Turn in Contemporary Feminist Scholarship', *JFSR* 24 (2008), 45-65 (65).

This point became clear to me when I conducted a qualitative study of how ordinary readers interpret the story of Jephthah in Judges 11.[7] That study revealed no hint that feminist scholarship on this text had reached beyond the academy to the wider public. Although most participants in my study did not want to identify with the unnamed daughter in the story, only one explicitly denounced Jephthah's killing of her as unnecessary and unethical. There was almost no recognition of the violence described in this text or condemnation of it, even from those readers who self-identified as non-religious. I have since wondered if these readers were uncritical of actions that would clearly be unacceptable today because they knew they were reading a text from the bible. Are violent acts like rape, mutilation, genocide or beheading acceptable when they are presented in the bible or other ancient sacred texts? Some think it is anachronistic to hold the bible to contemporary moral and ethical standards,[8] but I do not share that view. Any ancient text that is still being used as a source of religious authority must be called to account when it is in conflict with basic values in modern democracies, values like human rights and equality rights.

How, then, does this relate to my current views of Judith as a character? In 1993 my negative assessment was based mainly on how Judith is a male-constructed character who functions within the limits of a patriarchal, androcentric context. In a subsequent study, I looked at her story again and saw it as the culmination of a trajectory of misogyny and gynophobia beginning with Jael and developing through Esther, Proverbs and Ben Sira to *Judith*. I saw Judith as a character who gives expression to men's deepest fears, namely, a woman out of male control who kills a man when he is completely helpless.[9]

Now, I would look more directly at the manner in which Judith kills Holoferenes. She is not the only biblical character who beheads a perceived enemy and uses the head as a trophy. The men of Ephraim behead the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb, and bring their heads to Gideon (Judg. 7.25). David beheads Goliath and takes his head to Saul (1 Sam. 17.51, 54). Rechab and Baanah behead Ishbaal and take the head to David (2 Sam. 4.7-8). The wise woman of Abel has Sheba's head cut off and thrown over the city wall to Joab (2 Sam. 20.21-22). The leaders of Samaria behead the sons of Ahab at the demand of Jehu and send the

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[7] Pamela J. Milne, 'Son of a Prostitute and Daughter of a Warrior: What Do You Think the Story in Judges 11 Means?', *lectio difficilior* (http://www.lectio.unibe. ch/09_2/milne_son_of_a_prostitute.html) (2009) = 'From the Margins to the Margins: Jephthah's Daughter and her Father', in *Joshua and Judges* (ed. Athalya Brenner and Gale A. Yee; Texts@Contexts; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 209-34.

[8] See, for example, Efthimiadis-Keith, 'Judith' (151-56 = originally 101-106).

[9] Pamela J. Milne, 'Labouring with Abusive Biblical Texts: Tracing Trajectories of Misogyny', in *The Labour of Reading: Desire, Alienation, and Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Fiona C. Black, Roland Boer and Erin Runions; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999), 267-83.

heads to him in baskets (2 Kgs 10.7-8). Herod has John the Baptist beheaded and the head given to the daughter of Herodias who takes it to her mother, the one who sought the beheading (Mk 6.17-29; Mt. 14.1-12).

There has been international condemnation of the beheadings that have taken place in recent weeks. These actions have been called barbaric and war crimes. There is no such outrage expressed in any of the biblical texts, even though beheading is never a necessary act. Judith could simply have killed Holofernes and David could simply have killed Goliath. Beheading is a separate act of denigration: its purpose is often to strike terror among the enemies. If I were writing about Judith now, I would turn my attention to this and I would want to investigate why it is that beheading stories in the bible draw little attention from scholars or from those who use the bible as a moral guide. Perhaps a more critical approach to the acts and/or advocacy of dehumanizing barbarism contained in sacred texts like the bible and the Qur'an[10] might serve to delegitimize such acts in the modern world.

[10] Timothy R. Furnish has written a useful survey of the practice in Islam, challenging apologetic approaches that claim there is no mention of beheading in the Qur'an: Timothy R. Furnish, 'Beheading in the Name of Islam', *Middle East Quarterly* 12 (2005), 51-57.

Chapter 8

Judith, Feminist Ethics and Feminist Biblical/Hebrew Bible Interpretation*

Helen Efthimiadis-Keith

Introduction

It would seem that dichotomy and contradiction have plagued the history of research on every aspect of *Judith*. For example, a number of prominent Church Fathers, such as Clement of Rome, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Jerome have attempted to defend the book's historicity despite its flagrant and deliberate disregard for historical matters,[1] while Cappellus[2] disparaged it as 'a most silly fable, invented by a most inept, injudicious, impudent, and clownish Hellenist' because of its historical and geographical inconsistencies.

Similarly, some have decried the 'turgid style' of *Judith*[3] or rejected it on account of its supposedly lopsided structure[4] while others, such as Craven,[5] have hailed *Judith* as a masterful piece of artistry that is completely balanced in its bipartite structure.[6]

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[1] R.H. Pfeiffer, *History of New Testament Times with an Introduction to the Apocrypha* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1949, 1963 edn), 291-92.

[2] I am indebted to Pfeiffer, *History of New Testament Times*, 292 for the reference and its English translation. The Latin text is available online at https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=j7-vVLXHJMoC&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&authuser=0&hl=en&pg=GBS.PP5 (accessed 2 September 2014).

[3] Pfeiffer, *History of New Testament Times*, 299.

[4] See J.C. Dancy, 'The Book of Judith', in *The Shorter Books of the Apocrypha: Tobit, Judith, Rest of Esther, Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, Additions to Daniel and Prayer of Manasseh* (ed. J.C. Dancy; Cambridge Bible Commentaries on the Apocrypha; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 67-131 (67).

[5] T. Craven, 'Artistry and Faith in the Book of Judith', *Semeia* 8 (1977), 75-101 (75), and T. Craven, *Artistry and Faith in the Book of Judith* (SBLDS, 70; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 122-23.

[6] Cf. also M. Enslin, *The Book of Judith: Greek Text with an English Translation, Commentary and Critical Notes. Edited with a General Introduction and Appendices by Solomon Zeitlin* (Jewish Apocryphal Literature Series, 7; Leiden: Brill for Dropsie University, Philadelphia, 1972), 38, who describes *Judith* as 'an example of Jewish fiction at its best'.

Some of the book's main characters have been dealt with in an equally dichotomous manner. Several commentators have regarded Achior as completely superfluous to the story proper, while most have hardly bothered to deal with him at all. Prior to Roitman's 1989 study,[7] the most positive statement on this character was written by Moore. The latter described Achior as 'a crucial character for uniting both sections of the book…a splendid study in contrasts and an effective foil for several of the book's characters',[8] such as Holofernes and Judith. Roitman restored Achior's dignity as a character by ably demonstrating that there is a 'subtle complementarity'[9] between him and Judith that affects their effective functions. Roitman correctly concluded that Achior is 'a kind of double or "alter ego" for Judith'.[10] By far the most positive study regarding this character has been my own, which has demonstrated that Achior is 'the unconscious representation of the collective Jewish psyche'[11] responsible for *Judith* and so the book's effective protagonist, i.e. the character that 'undergoes the most change in the story and to whom all the events in the narrative may be related'.[12]

Without a doubt, the character who has attracted the most derision or praise has been Judith herself. For example, Bissell found her to be morally objectionable on account of her deceptive tongue and deliberate sexual enticement 'of a weak slave of his passions [Holofernes] that she may put him to death';[13] and Shumaker regards her 'heroism in some degree compromised'[14] by the false assurance that she provides Holofernes. By contrast, Clement of Rome[15] and

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[7] A.D. Roitman, 'The Function and Meaning of Achior in the Book of Judith', in *Society of Biblical Literature 1989 Seminar Papers* (ed. D.J. Lull; SBLSP, 28; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 540-49.

[8] C.A. Moore, *Judith: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 40; Garden City: Doubleday, 1985), 59.

[9] Roitman, 'The Function and Meaning of Achior', 552.

[10] Roitman, 'The Function and Meaning of Achior', 558-59.

[11] H. Efthimiadis-Keith, *The Enemy Is Within: A Jungian Psychoanalytic Approach to the Book of Judith* (Biblical Interpretation Series, 67; Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004), 415.

[12] Efthimiadis-Keith, *The Enemy Is Within*, 144.

[13] E.C. Bissel, *The Apocrypha of the Old Testament, with Historical Introductions, a Revised Translation, and Notes Critical and Explanatory* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886), 163.

[14] W. Shumaker, 'Critique of Luis Alonso-Schökel on Judith', in *Narrative Structures in the Book of Judith: Protocol of the Eleventh Colloquy: 27 January 1975* (ed. L.S.J. Alonso-Schökel; Berkeley, CA: The Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture, 1975), 30-33 (33).

[15] P. Schaff, 'Examples of Such Love', in *ANF01: The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus* (ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, 1885), 19-20 (20). Available online at *Christian Classics Ethereal Library*, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.ii.ii.lv.html (accessed 2 September 2014).

Ambrose of Milan[16] hail her for her bravery and virtue; while others, such as Tertullian,[17] praise her for her self-imposed celibacy.

These dichotomous and contradictory interpretations are not in the least surprising, as *Judith* represents an unconscious communication of the national Jewish psyche (or a faction thereof) at its time of composition.[18] Within this unconscious communication, Judith represents the *anima* or feminine contrasexual image of that male-identified Jewish community.[19] Archetypes and unconscious communications, such as dreams and myths,[20] easily combine seemingly contradictory elements into, for example, a single character, without feeling it necessary to divide them into binary opposites.[21] The latter is the *forte* of the conscious psyche, which prefers 'neatly ordered'[22] binaries that it can categorize and judge. Therefore, it is very difficult — if not impossible — for the conscious mind to perceive of historical facts combined in an unhistorical way, or to embrace a heroine who is imbued with Judith's breath-taking mixture of 'good' and 'bad' characteristics. Finding it impossible to hold opposites in one (head-)space, the conscious psyche insists on offering judgment on the whole ('good-and-bad') based on the interpretation of one of its parts ('good' or 'bad'). Jung's concept of the archetypes and the unconscious helps us not only to recognize and understand the way that the conscious psyche has rendered *Judith* and its heroine according to binary oppositions, but also paves the way for us to see them as the indivisible whole that they are.

By contrast to a Jungian approach that accommodates binary opposites within a single character or text, patriarchal/malestream interpretations have colluded with the workings of the conscious mind and disparaged *Judith*, its

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[16] P. Schaff, 'Judith, after Enduring Many Dangers for Virtue's Sake, Gained Very Many and Great Benefits', in *NPFN2-10: Ambrose: Selected Works and Letters* (ed. P. Schaff; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1980), 81. Available online at *Christian Classics Ethereal Library*, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf210.iv.i.iv.xiii.html (accessed 2 September 2014).

[17] P. Schaff, 'Heathen Examples Cry Shame upon This "Infirmity of the Flesh"', in *ANF04: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, American edn, 1985), 72. Available online at *Christian Classics Ethereal Library*, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf04.iii.vii. xvii.html (accessed 2 September 2014).

[18] Efthimiadis-Keith, *The Enemy Is Within*, 415.

[19] Efthimiadis-Keith, *The Enemy Is Within*, 410.

[20] C.G. Jung, *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology* (The Collected Works of C.G. Jung, 7; trans. R.F.C. Hull; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2nd edn, rev. and augmented, 1966), 176-77.

[21] C.G. Jung, *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology* (trans. R.F.C. Hull; New York: Meridian, Meridian edn, 1956), 80.

[22] J.C. Engelsman, *The Feminine Dimension of the Divine: A Study of Sophia and Feminine Images in Religion* (Wilmette, IL: Chiron, rev. edn, 1994), 17.

heroine and/or some or all of its aspects by focusing on one component of the good/bad dichotomy. Hence, Victorian concerns for women's behaviour prompted Bissel's[23] depreciation of Judith's morality on account of her deceptive tongue and sexually charged murder of Holofernes, while the sexual temptations facing a celibate clergy caused others, such as Tertullian[24] and Ambrose of Milan,[25] to ignore her lapses in morality in order to praise her for her self-chosen celibacy. Even so, collusion with the conscious psyche is not the sole province of patriarchal biblical interpretation. It also characterizes many feminist/pro-feminist[26] interpretations of *Judith.* As such, some commentators have either weighed Judith and found her wanting in her usefulness for (a feminist ideal of modern) women, or hailed *Judith* as a feminist triumph within the ancient literature of its time. In this essay I should like to examine a number of these feminist/pro-feminist interpretations in order to determine whether and to what extent they may have become as limiting and oppressive as the predominantly androcentric ones that they seek to deconstruct.[27] This examination will be conducted against the backdrop of the feminist ethics of care, justice, autonomy and the self. I will then probe the feminist ethics of care for alternative ways of reading *Judith* — and other biblical/Hebrew Bible (HB) texts — in ways that are more caring towards the text, the interpreter and the (ordinary reading) public/s.

Judith in the Feminist/Pro-Feminist Camp

As Pamela Milne noted, Judith's 'dangerous and daring role' in delivering her people 'has drawn the attention of many feminist and pro-feminist analysts interested in the depiction of women in the biblical tradition'.[28] Their analyses have offered differing and divergent assessments of this character's usefulness for the feminist endeavour. I should like to discuss some of these below and then evaluate them in the manner proposed.

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[23] Bissel, *The Apocrypha*, 163.

[24] Schaff, 'Heathen Examples', 72.

[25] Schaff, 'Judith', 81.

[26] The term is borrowed from Milne (originally 'What Shall We Do with Judith? A Feminist Reassessment of a Biblical "Heroine"', *Semeia* 62 [1993], 37-58 [43]; in this volume, 146) and refers to authors (and/or their works) that do not outwardly subscribe to any form of feminism, but attempt 'to incorporate the results of feminist scholarship in their work'.

[27] Spatio-temporal concerns prevent me from discussing all the works on *Judith*/Judith. I will therefore restrict myself to those that have made the greatest impact on me in recent months and refer to some of the others in footnotes.

[28] Milne, 'What Shall We Do With Judith?', 41 (121-22 in this volume).

Positive Feminist/Pro-feminist Evaluations of Judith and its Heroine

On the more positive side, Nickelsburg[29] found *Judith* 'especially striking for its feminism' because the author chose a woman as its protagonist and 'consistently depicted [her] as superior to the men with whom she is associated'. Similarly, Jordaan believes that a 'mainly positive picture is painted'[30] of Judith despite her ambiguous nature. Reading *Judith* from a narrative-therapeutic perspective, Jordaan regards Judith's character and her actions as a challenge to the dominant patriarchal narrative.[31] That narrative regards the bodies of women and foreigners 'as inferior and unable to do anything of value', an 'ideological stance [which] proved to be ineffective in taxing times, like war, as men could not always provide answers and give direction to the nation'.[32] When Judith enters the scene, an alternative narrative is introduced which 'foreshadows the beginning of a more equal, inclusive society',[33] despite Judith's narrative domestication:

> The book Judith challenged the status quo in various areas. The most prominent area was to show, in contrast with Jesus Ben Sira, the worth of women. Another area was in contrast to the social order regarding the inclusion of other people, like the Ammonites. A last area concerned the emancipation of slaves (Leviticus 25:46) and the inheritance by a widower's [*sic*?] family.[34]

Montley, who also acknowledges Judith's ambiguity, believes that this ambiguity is centred round Judith's 'archetypal significance' in embodying 'several archetypes whose influence in religion and art has been profound',[35] *viz.* the Warrior Woman, the *femme fatale* and the androgyne. The androgyne, as she correctly notes, is characteristic of 'the original totality', the nature of many gods/goddesses and original humanity (as per various nations' creation stories, including Genesis 1).[36] Cast in the light of these archetypal roles, Judith

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[29] G.W.E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction* (London: SCM, 1981), 108.

[30] P.J. Jordaan, 'Reading Judith as Therapeutic Narrative', in *Septuagint and Reception: Essays Prepared for the Association for the Study of the Septuagint in South Africa* (ed. J. Cook; VTSup 127; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 335-46 (336).

[31] Jordaan, 'Reading Judith', 340-42.

[32] Jordaan, 'Reading Judith', 340.

[33] Jordaan, 'Reading Judith', 341.

[34] P.J. Jordaan, 'The Pendulum Is Never Static: Jesus Sira to Jesus Christ on Women in the Light of Judith, Susanna and LXX Esther', *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 65.1 (2009), 178-83 (180).

[35] P. Montley, 'Judith in the Fine Arts: The Appeal of the Archetypal Androgyne', *Anima* 4.2 (1978), 37-42 (38).

[36] Montley, 'Judith in the Fine Arts', 39-40.

'embodies yet somehow transcends the male/female dichotomy' — as well as other patriarchal dualisms projected upon the natures of men and women — and 'rises above the sexism of her author's culture'.[37] Quoting Montley approvingly, Moore applauds, 'Clearly, Judith is the feminist's kind of person!' He too locates 'the striking appeal of the book of Judith' in the heroine's ability to transcend 'conventional molds of masculinity or femininity'.[38]

Narito's evaluation[39] is by far the most positive that I have encountered. Seizing upon the liberative aspects of *Judith*, Narito criticizes androcentric assessments of this book because they fail to grasp 'the lesson the writer wishes to convey, which is that God want people to be free from all forms of oppression and domination'.[40] Like Jordaan, she regards Judith's characterization and deeds as 'a critique to the Hebrew patriarchal structure that blocked the independence and leadership of women'.[41] Narito further states that, 'The book of Judith also spells out the empowerment of powerless women for peace-building, defined here as the struggle for freedom and liberation and the building of a new society of love, truth, justice, and peace'.[42] Narito's work, written against the backdrop of 'Valiant Filipina Women',[43] effectively urges people (especially women) of all backgrounds to emulate Judith's behaviour by recognizing societal oppression-dominance systems, taking a standpoint for the oppressed and employing 'well-planned strategies and tactics' to achieve their liberation.[44] If this includes violence, then so be it. After all, Judith achieved peace through violent means, and 'it seems that God affirms her action...(13.18)'.[45]

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[37] Montley, 'Judith in the Fine Arts', 40. Continuing with the theme of subversion, D. Sawyer, 'Gender Strategies in Antiquity: Judith's Performance', *Feminist Theology: The Journal of the Britain and Ireland School of Feminist Theology* 28 (2001), 9-26 (24), ably demonstrates that 'the elusive figure of Judith offers us a subversive, even anarchic, paradigm of gender play evident within the patriarchal meta-narrative of biblical tradition'. The subversive nature of Judith is also noted by, amongst others, A.J. Levine, 'Sacrifice and Salvation: Otherness and Domestication in the Book of Judith', in *A Feminist Companion to Esther, Judith and Susanna* (ed. A. Brenner; FCB, 7; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 208-23 (208-209).

[38] Moore, *Judith*, 65-66.

[39] Z.C. Narito, 'The Book of Judith', in *Women of Courage: Asian Women Reading the Bible* (ed. O.C. Lee, M.J. Choi, S.A. Lee-Park, E. Kim, M. Rodriguez, and D. Goodsir; Asian Women's Resource Centre for Culture and Theology, Seoul, Korea: SaDang, 1992), 53-62.

[40] Narito, 'The Book of Judith', 54.

[41] Narito, 'The Book of Judith', 55.

[42] Narito, 'The Book of Judith', 57.

[43] Narito, 'The Book of Judith', 58-61.

[44] Narito, 'The Book of Judith', 57-58.

[45] Narito, 'The Book of Judith', 58.

Negative Feminist/Pro-feminist Evaluations of Judith and its Heroine

Moore ends the section on Judith's character with praise for the literary quality of *Judith*, 'Of such diversity are literary gems made'.[46] While many contemporary analysts might agree with Moore on the literary brilliance of *Judith*,[47] there are those who would not be as enthusiastic as he regarding its feminist appeal. Stocker,[48] Cornelius[49] and Milne,[50] among others, belong to this category. While the works of these scholars openly acknowledge and praise certain anti-patriarchal aspects of Judith, they concur that *Judith* cannot be read positively from a feminist point of view. The juxtaposition of praise and anti-feminist conclusion can often be extremely stark.

Stocker, for example, contends that inasmuch as Judith is the avenger of Dinah/Bethuliah and 'identifies Israel with her own person', her chosen and enduring celibacy effectively 'demonize[s] masculine sexuality' in the patriarchal garb of Holofernes. Thus, '[w]hen Judith decapitates Holofernes — man, lover, ruler, commander — she beheads patriarchy'. This, however, poses a logical dilemma: 'since God himself is a patriarch [*sic*]', Judith's destruction of patriarchal power in the form of Holofernes 'inevitably' means that she challenges that of God.[51]

> This is why, despite its own thematics, the Book of Judith cannot afford to be feminist. It stresses that it is not Judith, but God, who has killed Holofernes — 'by the hand of a woman' (16:6). She was merely an instrument of the true patriarchal power... When Judith's triumphal song exalts that 'the mighty one' was not defeated by 'young men' or 'sons of the Titans' or 'giants', but by a woman (16:7), the point is that he was defeated by a mere woman... God...possesses the kind of power that requires no great armies and no muscles to exert itself. It just is. Ultimately, the weaker its instrument...the more manifest is the hidden hand that activates [it] beyond [its] own abilities. Judith's femininity is a sign that God's virility is not to be doubted or contested.[52]

Even so, avers Stocker a few pages later, 'the myth of Judith is...a radical and feminist alternative to the oedipal myth, and to all that it signifies about the ordering of Western culture'.[53]

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[46] Moore, *Judith*, 66.

[47] See, e.g., Craven, 'Artistry and Faith', 75.

[48] M. Stocker, *Judith, Sexual Warrior: Women and Power in Western Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

[49] E.M. Cornelius, 'An Interpretation of the Rhetorical Power of the Dual Character of Judith', *Theologia Viatorum: Journal for Theology and Religion in Africa* 33.3 (2009), 242-60.

[50] Milne, 'What Shall We Do with Judith?', 117-36 in this volume.

[51] Stocker, *Judith*, 8.

[52] Stocker, *Judith*, 8-9.

[53] Stocker, *Judith*, 23.

Stark contrast indeed!

Cornelius, who analyses the rhetorical function of Judith's dual nature, concedes a number of positive factors about *Judith*/Judith and their rhetorical effect on their 'original' audience. For her, Judith's piety motivates the reader/audience to follow her example and may have 'serve[d] to persuade' women that they too could play 'an important role in God's people's lives — that women actually do have a role to play in a patriarchal world'.[54] She also believes that '[for] ancient women, Judith's moving outside the limits of ancient patriarchy must have been a positive characteristic'.[55] Nevertheless, Cornelius finds the book and its heroine patriarchally flawed primarily because:

a) 'Judith's rhetorical skills were used to deceive and murder another human being'.[56]
b) 'Judith turns back to patriarchy' in the end, 'which must have been a positive outcome for all males'.[57]
c) Women are presented as incapable of winning without the use of 'a typical [*sic*] female thing such as beauty [and sexuality], a weapon of manipulation!'.[58]

'Unfortunately', writes Cornelius, 'Judith does not become a liberated woman at all or does not rise into a position of prominence'. Rather, 'she returns to the private sphere and is reinscripted into androcentric Israel'.[59] As such, Judith 'became a model for the typical subordinate role of women in patriarchy'[60] and the 'glimpse of hope' which 'emerge[d] for women, only…disappear[s] again'.[61] Worse still, Cornelius opines, Judith was there to make the ancient men laugh, 'I think this text dares to state, "you did not really believe a woman can win by means of manly characteristics?"'[62] And: 'Can you…imagine the ancient men laughing at how she only won because men would not dare to let a beautiful woman go by without using her?'[63]

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[54] Cornelius, 'An Interpretation', 249.
[55] Cornelius, 'An Interpretation', 251.
[56] Cornelius, 'An Interpretation', 250.
[57] Cornelius, 'An Interpretation', 251. On the domestication of Judith, see further Levine, 'Sacrifice and Salvation', 218-23. Cornelius ('An Interpretation') uses Levine's 'Sacrifice and Salvation' throughout her article.
[58] Cornelius, 'An Interpretation', 254.
[59] Cornelius, 'An Interpretation', 256.
[60] Cornelius, 'An Interpretation', 256.
[61] Cornelius, 'An Interpretation', 257.
[62] Cornelius, 'An Interpretation', 255.
[63] Cornelius, 'An Interpretation', 258.

Milne, whom I would like to quote at length, is perhaps the most negative. According to Milne, Judith is far from 'a feminist heroine or a feminist's heroine'.[64] Even though some of Judith's actions are atypical of Jewish patriarchal culture,

> She is not a counter-cultural character, but remains very much a man's woman... She repeatedly identifies with male models like Abraham and...Simeon... More than this, however, she identifies against female characters when she ignores the plight of Dinah [*sic*] and the Shechemite women...when she eradicates their individual identities... In short, *the text presents Judith as the very antithesis of a woman-identified woman.*
>
> Moreover, as a 'helper'...[she] effectively reinforces the patriarchal ideology that women are inferior and secondary by repeatedly making self-effacing...statements. Not only does she attribute all her success to the deity...but she makes a point of emphasizing the negative attitudes held by her Israelite/Jewish society toward women. In Jdt 9.9-10 she, not the narrator, draws attention to the added ignominy of being defeated by a woman... In short, Judith is presented, and as a narrative character, presents herself virtually completely from a male, patriarchal perspective... [H]er very action is rooted in the dynamics of men's fear of women's sexuality... Judith liberates neither herself nor her countrywomen from the status quo of the biblical gender ideology.[65]

An Appraisal of Various Positive and Negative Feminist/Pro-feminist Evaluations of *Judith* and its Heroine

In recent years, I have come to question readings that find overwhelmingly in favour of or against the feminist 'character' of *Judith*/Judith and other HB texts/characters. I am particularly interested in the kinds of ethics and personal motivations that might prompt them. For example, what prompts certain feminists/pro-feminists to declare unequivocally Judith a 'feminist heroine' despite the text's androcentric focus? *Judith*'s androcentric focus became clear to me through my own Jungian analysis of the book. My analysis showed, for example, that *Judith* could be read as an unconscious communication/dream in which Judith's individuation cycle exactly follows that of a man — despite her overt femininity.[66] Given that Judith is the text's protagonist, the book's deep structure could be signifying that 'salvation is to be found through the enactment of the male individuation cycle'![67]

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[64] Milne, 'What Shall We Do with Judith?', 54 (123 in this volume).

[65] Milne, 'What Shall We Do with Judith?', 54-55 (135-36 in this volume, my italics).

[66] Efthimiadis-Keith, *The Enemy Is Within*, 410.

[67] Efthimiadis-Keith, *The Enemy Is Within*, 410. It goes without saying that this too is merely *an* interpretation that requires further investigation. I am no longer as certain as I was then that *Judith* is indeed androcentric. I am beginning to think that the book is neither andro- nor gynocentric, but that it may rather be *theo*centric.

Furthermore, I find it very interesting that men such as Nickelsburg[68] and Moore,[69] who do not outwardly ascribe to any feminist/pro-feminist persuasion, have penned some of the most explicitly *feminist* praise for the book. By contrast, female exegetes appear to be far more reticent to do so. As we have seen, Stocker, who believes that *Judith* is 'a radical and *feminist* alternative to the oedipal myth',[70] also states that 'despite its own thematics, the Book of Judith cannot afford to be *feminist*'.[71] What could be the reasons behind this phenomenon? Could some form of personal/patriarchal guilt be underlying the man scholars' interpretations? Could they be attempting to stem feminist aggression towards the biblical text and/or protect sacred literature (and why)? Is it possible that the woman scholars are more keenly aware of the patriarchal machinations of the text, thus accounting for their reticence? Why is the most positive evaluation written by Narito,[72] a woman, based on the liberative aspects of *Judith*, and why is this evaluation not specifically feminist in orientation? Could Narito, who advocates against androcentric interpretations of this book, be letting her own contextual needs blind her to its androcentricity (if indeed it is androcentric)? Or, are those needs liberating her from a gendered reading to focus on the text's/heroine's redemptive qualities?

On the other side of the coin, all the 'negative' assessments of *Judith* and its heroine are written by woman scholars who are overt in their feminist 'confession'. What prompts those interpreters to assess *Judith* in hugely negative terms, despite its many subversive elements *and* the fact that Judith has served as a model for many women (such as Narito, above, and Charlotte Corday)[73] and men in their people's liberation struggles? Could years of oppression at the hands of malestream interpretations be blinding them to the liberative aspects of the text? Or, has this oppression provided them with the acuity they need to guard against the text's androcentricity? What kind of personal feelings are involved in such readings? One cannot throw the proverbial baby out with the bathwater! To my mind, despite the text's androcentricity,

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[68] Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*.

[69] Moore, *Judith*.

[70] Stocker, *Judith*, 23, my italics.

[71] Stocker, *Judith*, 8, my italics.

[72] Narito, 'The Book of Judith'.

[73] See Stocker, *Judith*, 113, for Charlotte Corday's actions during the Terror phase of the French Revolution and her subsequent hagiography. Inspired by *Judith*, Corday entered the tent of the demagogue, Marat, by pretending to inform against his enemies. Not fearing her womanly frame and wishing to indulge his senses, Marat, like Holofernes, allowed Corday to enter his quarters. Seeing that he was seated customarily in his slipper-bath — to treat a painful skin disease — he could offer little or no resistance when she mortally wounded him by stabbing him in the lung, thereby effecting liberation for her people.

> One cannot ignore the fact that Judith is a female character, as there is nothing accidental in dreams. Perhaps Judith's femininity and male individuation cycle transcend the issue of women's empowerment and depict something very close to Jung's heart, *viz.* the *hieros gamos* or marriage of the opposites — the ultimate aim of the individuation process in both men and women.[74]

From this perspective, the androgynous Judith may well be construed to serve as a powerful model for the (re-)integration of male and female elements in both men and women.

To my mind, making unequivocal judgments about the feminist value of a particular text/character entails collusion with malestream interpretations of the conscious psyche: the conscious psyche attempts to split composite dualities into separate elements (binaries) and judge the whole on the basis of one of its parts. Positive/negative is, after all, one of the dualities that have been projected on humanity in a gendered fashion, so that all that is positive is male and all that is negative is female. Since feminists have fought against the patriarchal endorsement of such binarism, it may well be anti-feminist (and patriarchal!) to attempt any interpretation that does not allow the dualities of the text in question to speak for themselves. Moreover, feminist/pro-feminist interpretations that discard or unnecessarily laud biblical texts with regard to a feminist agenda are unethical for at least three reasons.

1. They completely eschew the genetic contexts of such texts.
2. They close meaning in the same way that malestream interpretations do.
3. They fall short of the feminist ethics of care, justice, autonomy, and the self.

I would like to offer my own exploratory thoughts on the shortcomings of feminist/pro-feminist interpretations, hoping that these thoughts will engender (pardon the pun) honest self-examination in our endeavours at feminist biblical interpretation, and move us forward in a way that takes greater cognizance of ourselves, our publics, and our texts.

The Text/s

As Mouton correctly observes, the last centuries have seen a shift in hermeneutical emphasis from 'text production' (the origins of the text), via 'text preservation and mediation', to 'text reception and interpretation'.[75] This shift, which is also evident in *Judith* studies,[76] was logical and necessary to break the

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[74] Efthimiadis-Keith, *The Enemy Is Within*, 410.

[75] E. Mouton, *Reading a New Testament Document Ethically* (Boston: Brill, 2002), 8.

[76] Efthimiadis-Keith, *The Enemy Is Within*, 1-2.

hegemony of 'the scientist ethos of biblical scholarship',[77] witnessed primarily in the supposed value-free inquiry of historical criticism.[78] However, in my opinion each step has increased the distance between the text and the reader, to the extent that some reader-interpreters are no longer interested in the genetic context of the text at all. Accordingly, they have made certain a-historical and a-cultural errors by interpreting the text purely from their own contextual confines. A clear example of this is the accusation that Judith's characterization colludes with patriarchal disdain for women in that she is depicted as a lying, deceptive, manipulative woman who killed a man through her beauty and feminine wiles.[79] As deSilva ably demonstrates, the use of deception and manipulation was clearly acceptable and even laudable in Judith's cultural context:

> The ancient audience will not chasten Judith as they hear this story; they will chasten Holofernes for his foolishness for letting his guard down and being so quick and eager to believe that this outsider would betray her kin and nation to those that were strangers to her.[80]

And why? 'The virtuous person protects the honor of his or her kinship at all costs, even if he or she has to lie repeatedly to do so'.[81] Judith was fighting not only for her group's honor, but also for that of her God.[82] It was therefore not only acceptable but also highly laudable for her to lie/deceive to achieve her aims. That much is obvious from the exalted praises which Judith receives upon her victorious return (Jdt. 13.15-20). Note that the people's/Uzziah's praise to God and Judith follows immediately upon Judith's statement regarding her deceit/'trickery' in 13.16:

> Then she took the head out of the bag and showed it to them, and said, 'See, here is the head of Holofernes... The Lord has struck him down by the hand of a woman. As the Lord lives...*it was my face that tricked him to his destruction.*' All the people were greatly astonished, and bowed down and worshiped God, and said with one accord, 'Blessed art thou, our God, who hast brought into contempt this day the enemies of thy people'. And Uzziah said to her, 'O daughter, you are blessed by the

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[77] E. Schüssler Fiorenza, 'The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: Decentering Biblical Scholarship', *JBL* 107.1 (1988), 3-17 (9).

[78] For historical-critical issues and approaches to *Judith*, see Moore, *Judith*, 37-108, Efthimiadis-Keith, *The Enemy Is Within*, 1-2, 6-23, and T. Craven, 'The Book of Judith in the Context of Twentieth-century Studies of the Apocryphal/ Deuterocanonical Books', *CBQ* 1.2 (2003), 187-229 (188-92).

[79] Cornelius, 'An Interpretation', 254, 257.

[80] D.A. deSilva, 'Judith the Heroine? Lies, Seduction, and Murder in Cultural Perspective', *BTB* 36.2 (2006), 55-61 (59).

[81] DeSilva, 'Judith the Heroine?', 57.

[82] DeSilva, 'Judith the Heroine?', 58.

> Most High God above all women on earth; and blessed be the Lord God, who created the heavens and the earth, who has guided you to strike the head of the leader of our enemies. Your hope will never depart from the hearts of men, as they remember the power of God. May God grant this to be a perpetual honor to you, and may he visit you with blessings, because you did not spare your own life when our nation was brought low, but have avenged our ruin, walking in the straight path before our God.' And all the people said, 'So be it, so be it!' (RSVA, 13.15-20, my italics).[83]

As for the element of beauty and seduction, that was merely part of Judith's deceptive strategy. This is clearly demonstrated by the immediate juxtaposition of her prayer (9.2-14), in which she requests that God would grant her Simeon's power of deceit to destroy the enemy, and her beautification ritual in 10.1-4.[84] Witness further the association of beauty and deceit in ch. 13 (above) and 16.6-9:

> But the Lord Almighty has foiled them by the hand of a woman. For their mighty one did not fall by the hands of the young men, nor did the sons of the Titans smite him, nor did tall giants set upon him; but *Judith the daughter of Merari undid him with the beauty of her countenance.* For she took off her widow's mourning to exalt the oppressed in Israel. *She anointed her face with ointment and fastened her hair with a tiara and put on a linen gown to deceive him.* Her sandal ravished his eyes, her beauty captivated his mind, and the sword severed his neck (my italics).

I therefore suggest that the audience might have been laughing at Holofernes, rather than at Judith![85]

To return to my criticism, while it may well be true that the author is dead,[86] one cannot simply interpret the text at will. The 'number of interpretations that can legitimately be given to a text are limited', as Schüssler-Fiorenza rightly states, if we are 'to do justice to the text in its historical contexts'.[87] By interpreting texts a-historically and/or a-culturally, we are falling short of the first feminist ethics that should, perhaps, inform our endeavours. I refer here to the ethics of *justice* and *care*, which I would like to discuss briefly before proceeding with what I perceive to be acts of injustice and a lack of care within feminist/pro-feminist interpretations of *Judith* and also other HB texts.

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[83] Unless otherwise indicated, the Scriptural quotations in this study are from the *Revised Standard Version of the Bible with Apocrypha*, copyrighted 1971 and 1952 by the Division on Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA.

[84] See Efthimiadis-Keith, *The Enemy Is Within*, 222-31, for a detailed analysis of Judith's prayer according to the motif of deception, and its relation to the sexual element in *Judith*.

[85] So too Sawyer, 'Gender Strategies', 16. Contra Cornelius, 'An Interpretation', 258.

[86] C.C. Park, 'Author! Author! Reconstructing Roland Barthes', *The Hudson Review* 43.3 (1990), 377-98.

[87] Schüssler Fiorenza, 'The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation', 14.

In my understanding, the feminist movement arose as a response of *justice* to the injustices committed against women. Similarly, feminist biblical interpretation arose as a *justice* response to the oppression women were subjected to through patriarchal appropriations of biblical texts. One might, therefore, have expected feminist ethicist-philosophers-psychologists to appropriate wholeheartedly an ethics of justice as the basis of feminist ethics. Ironically, this has not been the case. The earliest feminist ethicist-philosophers-psychologists have challenged the priority of justice amongst the social/moral virtues, 'suggesting that justice is one value among many, and one that may need the presence of others in order to deliver its own undenied value'.[88] In the main, they have reacted against the Kantian–Rawlsian versions of justice, 'construed as respect for equal rights to formal goods'[89] (e.g. having contracts kept, equal opportunities, and basic liberties), arguing that none of these goods can ensure that those 'who have and mutually respect such rights will have any other relationships to one another than the minimal relationship needed to keep such a "civil society" going'.[90] In other words, these early feminist thinkers objected to the cold, almost robotic vision of humanity that Kantian–Rawlsian justice espoused. They argued that people are emotional and relational beings who need their emotional and relational needs met if 'their rights, and respect for rights'[91] are not to become compatible with great misery caused not only by 'individual misfortunes and psychic sickness, but social and moral impoverishment'.[92] For these early feminist thinkers, the kind of non-interference and individual autonomy which the Kantian–Rawlsian view of justice promotes is decidedly male in orientation and detrimental to both the individual and the society in which they live.[93] Enter, therefore, the ethics of *care*, championed primarily by Harvard educational psychologist Carol Gilligan.

Having conducted a series of interviews, in which she probed whether women exhibited a pattern of moral development different from that of men,[94] Gilligan

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[88] A.C. Baier, 'The Need for More Than Justice', in *Justice and Care: Essential Readings in Feminist Ethics* (ed. V. Held; Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995), 47-58 (47).

[89] Baier, 'The Need for More than Justice', 51.

[90] Baier, 'The Need for More than Justice', 51.

[91] Baier, 'The Need for More than Justice', 51.

[92] Baier, 'The Need for More than Justice', 51.

[93] Baier, 'The Need for More than Justice', 52-53; M. Friedman, 'Beyond Caring: The Demoralization of Gender', in Held, ed., *Justice and Care*, 61-77 (63).

[94] Gilligan's interviews are based on the research by L. Kohlberg, 'The Development of Children's Orientations toward a Moral Order: I. Sequence in the Development of Moral Thought', *Human Development* 51.1 (2008), 8-20. (Reprint of L. Kohlberg, 'The Development of Children's Orientations toward a Moral Order: I. Sequence in the Development of Moral Thought', *Vita Humana* 6 [1963], 11-33.) Kohlberg had identified three stages of moral

concluded that women speak in a different voice to men about morality itself and about moral maturity. For women, interconnection was a given rather than a freely contracted commodity, meaning that women 'arrive at an understanding of life that reflects the limits of autonomy and control. As a result, women's development delineates the path not only to a less violent life, but also to a maturity realized by interdependence and taking care.'[95] Furthermore, Gilligan discovered that, because care and connection are integral to women, 'the major changes in women's lives' seemed to involve 'changes in the understanding and activities of care' rather than autonomy.[96] As Baier states, this discovery led Gilligan — and others who followed in her footsteps — to develop an ethics of care, understood as 'a felt concern for the good of others and for community with them',[97] and more communal understandings of the individual/self-hood and autonomy.

I do not wish to enter the discussion of whether and to what extent Gilligan's views are based on correct/incorrect data analysis, are informed by the patriarchal socialization of women and men, may lead to further stereotyping and oppression, or to what extent her understanding of justice may be limited.[98] I also do not wish to enter into the debate about how and to what extent justice and care are interrelated. I wish merely to acknowledge the (complexity of the) interrelation between justice and care and draw out some of its implications for the types of feminist interpretation that I have described. I return, therefore, to my critique of some forms of feminist *Judith* and HB interpretation.

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development, *viz.* a pre-conventional stage, manifested in a paramount need to please parental authority-figures, a conventional stage in which the individual tries to fit in with a group, and a post-conventional, critical phase in which conventionally accepted truths and requirements are tested in accordance with a (Kantian) sense of autonomy that requires, amongst others, a respect for the individual rational will of each person. As Baier, 'The Need for More Than Justice', 50, indicates, when Kohlberg's questionnaires, which required mainly verbal responses to verbally sketched moral quandaries, were administered to female and male subjects, it was found that female subjects generally scored lower than their male counterparts *and* that they reverted to 'the lower stage of the conventional level even after briefly (usually in adolescence) attaining the post-conventional level'. For a full description of these results, see C. Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 24-63, 64-105.

[95] Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, 172, see also 151-74.

[96] Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, 171. Thus, while men progressed morally in the way of autonomy and distance (as per Kohlberg, 'The Development'), women progressed in their understanding of care, 'from merely pleasing others to helping and nurturing' (Baier, 'The Need for More Than Justice', 50).

[97] Baier, 'The Need for More Than Justice', 48.

[98] See M. Friedman, 'Beyond Caring', 63-67.

By ignoring the historical/cultural context of biblical texts such as *Judith*, unequivocal/binaristic interpretations have already violated the justice principle. While this is a different type of injustice to that which was resisted by various liberation movements, including feminism, it is a form of injustice nevertheless. As Schüssler-Fiorenza might put it, such interpretations fail 'to give the text its due', thus betraying what she has termed 'an ethics of historical reading':

> Such a historical reading seeks to give the text its due by asserting its original meanings over and against later dogmatic usurpations. It makes the assimilation of the text to our own experience and interests more difficult and thereby keeps alive the 'irritation' of the original text by challenging our own assumptions, world views and practices.[99]

While I am not at all advocating for the supremacy of historical-critical methods, I do wish to acknowledge the importance of a text's historical/cultural background as 'discovered' by those and/or other methods. If *Judith* was written ca. 63 BCE, as I have maintained elsewhere,[100] then one cannot, to my mind, unequivocally state that the book is either pro- or anti-feminist. To do so would be wholly anachronistic and fail to give the text its due. It would go against the grain of a text which seems to delight in presenting composite dualities and ambiguities as they are. The most one could allege is the possibility of a subversive element in *Judith*.[101]

Furthermore, in terms of the quotation from Schüssler-Fiorenza,[102] making unequivocal statements about *Judith*'s feminist suitability would represent an attempt to do away with the 'irritation' of the original text by either smoothing over its androcentric interests or simply writing the entire text off. One such 'irritation', among many, is the fact that Judith returns home without assuming any overt leadership position. As we have seen, this 'domestication' of Judith is one of the textual reasons that prompts Cornelius[103] to discard *Judith* as patriarchally blemished despite the many positive aspects of Judith's nature that she noted. But the text cannot be written off. The 'irritation' is here to stay. We cannot commit texticide, no matter how much we might wish to.

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[99] Schüssler Fiorenza, 'The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation', 14.

[100] Efthimiadis-Keith, *The Enemy Is Within*, 419.

[101] See, e.g., Sawyer, 'Gender Strategies', 14-15, 17-24; Montley, 'Judith in the Fine Arts', 40; Levine, 'Sacrifice and Salvation', 208-209; and J.W. Van Henten, 'Judith as Alternative Leader: A Rereading of Judith 7–13', in Brenner, ed., *A Feminist Companion to Esther*, 224-52 (251-52).

[102] Schüssler Fiorenza, 'The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation', 14.

[103] Cornelius, 'An Interpretation', 244-51, 255-58.

Moreover, by trying to discard the textual irritant/s, we are betraying the profound hubris underlying our judgment. We are, in effect, boldly asserting, 'We are right! You are wrong! You have nothing to teach us!' and we close the book on that. We are not permitting *Judith* to challenge our 'assumptions, world-views and practices', and we are not giving ourselves the opportunity to be challenged by it. We are closing meaning for both ourselves and the text. Not only is this hubris, but it is also foolish. Denying ourselves the opportunity to be challenged means that we are denying ourselves the chance to grow, thus stultifying ourselves and our readings into obsoleteness. Such is our lack of care towards ourselves and the text/s.

Similarly, it is both a sign of hubris and foolishness to try to smooth over the 'irritation'. In so doing, we are domesticating the text (as some claim Judith has been), thus equally denying it the opportunity to challenge our 'assumptions, world-views and practices' and denying ourselves the opportunity to be challenged by it. We are foolishly asserting that our values are better or higher than the ones we think we read in the text, i.e. than those of its context, and co-opting it patronizingly for our agenda. This too is texticide. This too is suicide. This too is un-caring injustice.

Having discussed our acts of injustice and lack of care towards the text and ourselves, I wish to turn to how such readings manifest injustice towards others and, more specifically, our reading public/s.

The Public

Unequivocal feminist judgments on *Judith* entail a travesty of justice and a lack of care at which early feminist ethicists might balk. Such judgments also entail a level of disrespect towards the text/s and ourselves, which readily translates into a disrespectful and un-caring attitude towards our various publics. This is particularly true for our 'ordinary reader' public whom we are constantly trying to liberate, be it from pre-critical readings[104] or from collusion with the patriarchal agenda of biblical texts. This too is a sign of hubris and, moreover, an act of closing meaning. It is as though we were the custodians of knowledge, the only ones who can correctly divine and apportion the significance of biblical texts. In so doing, we are essentially entrenching the sin of clericalism — we are telling others that they cannot interpret the Bible, that they indeed have no right to, and that we have to do it for them:

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[104] D. Patte, *Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: A Reevaluation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 17-18.

> Clericalism, by definition, disempowers the people and turns them into 'laity' dependent on the clergy. The basic assumption of clericalism is that the people have no direct access to the divine. The clergy monopolize the instrument of mediation between God and the laity. The clergy alone have authorized theological training; they alone are authorized to preach, to teach, to administer the Church. They alone possess sacramental power.[105]

By unwittingly entrenching a new kind of clericalism, we are committing a double injustice: we are disempowering our public and making them dependent on us, *and* we are denying them the possibility of feeling the power that lives within the HB[106] — however we may construe that power. There is neither justice nor care in that. We need to examine *why* we do *what* we do and *for whom*.[107] In short, we need to practice an 'ethics of accountability'. Such ethics of accountability cannot be construed only in terms of elucidating 'the ethical consequences and political functions [of biblical texts] in their historical as well as in their contemporary sociopolitical contexts'.[108] Such ethics must also take account of the way that our readings affect those who read them. It is this concern that drove Patte to write his seminal work, *Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: A Reevaluation*, in 1995. Like Patte, we too must examine our exegetical practices and discover whether, how, and to what extent they are hurting others.[109] As feminist biblical interpreters, we cannot hide behind our attempts to enlighten others with regard to the texts' androcentric bias(es) and/or finding the liberative potential in biblical texts. While these attempts are both laudable and vital for the just transformation of our society, we need to examine *why* we undertake them and *for whom*. We need to examine and take responsibility for both our *motives* for engaging in feminist biblical interpretation and the *effects* that our writings are having on others. However, if we, as feminist biblical interpreters, see ourselves as the new custodians of knowledge and correct interpretation, thereby instituting a new kind of clericalism and closing meaning for others, then, I would suggest, our efforts are just as bad as the androcentric ones that we are trying to displace.

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[105] R.R. Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon, 1983), 206-207.

[106] So too Schüssler Fiorenza, 'The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation', 3.

[107] Similarly Mouton, *Reading*, 11-12, and G.O. West 'The Vocation of an African Biblical Scholar on the Margins of Biblical Scholarship', *Old Testament Essays* 19.1 (2006), 307-36 (318).

[108] Schüssler Fiorenza, 'The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation', 15.

[109] Patte, *Ethics*, 9.

Neo-clericalism flouts an 'ethics of accountability' precisely *because* it espouses the kind of individualistic, distancing autonomy that cannot be part of an ethical feminist agenda. If, for example, we dismiss a text such as *Judith* on account of (a) perceived patriarchal flaw(s), then we ignore an entire history of interpretations in which real women have used these texts for liberative purposes. Worse still, we deny these women. Similarly, when we hail *Judith* as a triumph of feminist theology, we ignore a long line of interpretation in which women have been urged to follow Judith's supposed example of self-effacement[110] and subordination[111] or eschew her deceptive, sexually charged ways.[112]

This kind of disconnection from communal history endorses the type of non-communal, non-relational autonomy and liberal self-concept that early feminist thinkers saw themselves contesting.[113] It fails to take into account the social relationships between persons, between persons and texts, and between persons, texts, and historical reality. It acts with a kind of self-sufficiency and un-caring attitude that espouses disregard for the other and promotes distance and adversariness by leading people to regard one another and one another's interpretations as threats.[114] It presupposes and reinstitutes a dichotomous relationship 'between autonomy and the collectivity'[115] that comes dangerously close to the kind of androcentric, disinterested scholarship (and objective fallacy) that feminist scholars have rightly challenged.[116]

Similarly, when we *state* our interpretations, instead of offering them for what they are, namely *opinions*, then we run the risk of approximating the kind of top-down androcentric interpretations we have tried to combat and reinstituting the objective fallacy. This not only betrays a non-relational concept of autonomy and the self, but does violence to the text and to the reader, particularly the ordinary reader who still, to a great extent, relies on 'experts' to tell them how to understand the Bible correctly. For such a reader, opinions rather than statements would be more useful. Opinions do not close meaning as much as statements do. Opinions are much more caring.

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[110] Milne, 'What Shall We Do with Judith?', 54-55 (135-36 in this volume).

[111] Cornelius, 'An Interpretation', 256.

[112] Bissel, *The Apocrypha*, 163.

[113] M. Friedman, *Autonomy, Gender, Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 81-82.

[114] Friedman, *Autonomy*, 82.

[115] Friedman, *Autonomy*, 85.

[116] See F. Klopper, 'Interpretation Is All We Have: A Feminist Perspective on the Objective Fallacy', *Old Testament Essays* 22.1 (2009), 88-101; Schüssler Fiorenza, 'The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation', 11; Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon), 44.

The Guild

The criticism that I have levelled against overtly positive/negative feminist/pro-feminist evaluations of *Judith*/HB literature does not bode well for the future of feminist biblical interpretation.

First, as indicated, it is possible that our efforts in trying to liberate others from the tyranny of androcentric texts/interpretations have resulted in our flouting precisely the ethics that we may think that we have upheld, namely those of justice and care.

Second, it is possible that our interpretations close meaning for other readers, thus denying them the very rights of autonomy and selfhood that we have claimed as women in terms of interpreting sacred texts for ourselves. In this, we show a tremendous lack of care towards ourselves, our texts and our various publics, be they other feminist/pro-feminist scholars, male and female members of the academy, students, ordinary secular readers, members of faith communities, or all of the above.

Third, it is possible that these acts of closing meaning undermine the subversive nature and intellectual rigour of our discipline (that of feminist biblical interpretation), thus affecting its credibility and sustainability and heralding its demise. By this I do not mean to suggest that feminist biblical criticism will someday cease to exist. I cannot imagine that happening in as much as I cannot envisage a totally just and egalitarian society; human nature will simply (or sinfully) not allow for that. What concerns me is that we will render our efforts obsolete,[117] for in closing meaning for others, we are essentially closing meaning for ourselves. In my opinion, this applies particularly to the faith-full communities and our disregard for what we have patronizingly labelled as their pre-critical interpretations. For, as many African theologians/ biblical scholars have averred, it would be 'totally irresponsible'[118] to ignore the faith of the faith-full in

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[117] D.J. Lawrie, 'Old Testament Studies: Quo Vadis?', *Scriptura* 100 (2009), 1-14 (9), voices a similar though somewhat different concern: 'I hope that the spirit of feminist scholarship will continue to influence Old Testament studies. My fear is not so much that the feminist enterprise will collapse, but that its more or less total success will efface its legacy. Once much of what feminists fought to establish is taken for granted by male and female scholars alike, some will continue to hunt for ever subtler points to make and others will look for more pleasing arrangements of the existing furniture. In the absence of the passion and the vision, the exercise will come to resemble that of the latter-day source critics, pursuing sources within sources and glosses on glosses. Feminism is important in its own right; it is equally important as a pointer to what academic theology should never lose and is permanently in danger of losing.'

[118] S. Nadar, '"Texts of Terror?" The Conspiracy of Rape in the Bible, Church and Society: The Case of Esther 2:1-18', in *African Women, Religion and Health: Essays in Honor of Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye* (ed I. Phiri and S. Nadar; Maryknoll: Orbis, 2006), 77-95 (82).

our work. Rather, as West proposes in terms of the poor and working class, we should learn the art of allowing the faith-full to use us and our critical skills, in such a way that we serve them and do not distance ourselves from them and their various contexts.[119] Or, as Patte[120] has it, we should allow pre-critical interpretations to exist alongside their critical counterparts — without judgment.

Conclusion and Way Forward

In this essay I have contended that overtly positive/negative feminist/ pro-feminist interpretations of/judgments on *Judith*/HB texts can lead feminist biblical interpreters to engage in the same meaning-closing endeavours as had characterized the androcentric interpretations which we have been contesting. I have argued that such meaning-closing endeavours flout the very feminist ethics upon which one could rightly expect them to be based, namely justice, care, autonomy, and the self. I have also demonstrated that they show a profound level of disrespect towards the text/s, the interpreters who write commentaries, and the various publics that such interpreters may have. In this final section, I would like to sketch possible alternatives to such meaning-closing endeavours that would, in my opinion, exhibit more care towards the text, the interpreter, and the public.

First, an autobiographical approach[121] which takes account of *and spells out* the interpreter's background, experience *and* emotions[122] would be most helpful, both for the feminist biblical interpreter and the 'ordinary reader'. It would help us as interpreters to see that we do not interpret in a *personal* vacuum (we already know that we do not interpret in a socio-political vacuum). It would give us greater compassion (care) towards the ordinary reader, allowing 'space' for her/his interpretations alongside ours. Similarly, an autobiographical approach would help the reader to see that our interpretations are just that — *our interpretations*, which will give them the 'space' to present her/his own without fear of reprimand or 'getting it wrong'. Naturally, this suggestion requires a fair amount of personal introspection on our part. While this is something we may not be very keen to do, it must be done if we are to create space for others to write their own stories into the fissures of the biblical texts and keep the interpretative endeavour afloat.

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[119] West, 'The Vocation', 215. See also Patte, *Ethics*, 124.

[120] Patte, *Ethics*, 121-22.

[121] See West, 'The Vocation'; J.W. Schutte, 'When They, We, and the Passive Become I — Introducing Autobiographical Biblical Criticism', *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 61.1–2 (2005), 401-16; S. Nadar, 'Toward a Feminist Missiological Agenda: A Case Study of the Jacob Zuma Rape Trial', *Missionalia* 37.1 (2009), 85-102.

[122] Nadar, 'Toward a Feminist', 90-92.

A second point is closely related to the first. Identifying who we are and what our general background is (e.g. Black/White/Methodist/ Pentecostal) is no longer enough. We need to put into practice the womanist principle that accepts 'emotional knowledge as a legitimate category of academic analysis' without forsaking the 'analytical skills and tools' of our discipline.[123] In other words, as feminist interpreters, we need to be aware of and state our emotional connection/disconnection to the text so as to understand *why* we may be seeing what we are seeing. In this way we will avoid falling into the trap of objective fallacy (or objective phallusy, as some would have it) and we will leave 'space' for others to share their experiences and interpretations of the text/s freely.

Third, a more caring approach to feminist biblical/HB interpretation would take seriously what we call pre-critical interpretations. It would realize that all critical interpretations are essentially based on pre-critical ones,[124] and it would allow the latter to exist alongside the former.

Fourth, more caring feminist biblical interpreters would put themselves and their tools in the hands of the faith-full community, in the way that Gerald West[125] is doing for the poor, the marginalized, and the working class.

Fifth, we need to couch our interpretations as opinions and not statements. As we have seen, Cornelius writes *Judith* off on account of, amongst other things, what she terms the heroine's 'return to patriarchy'.[126] This, however, is merely *an* interpretation, *an* opinion in a sea of possible interpretations/ opinions regarding Judith's return to her home. Sawyer, for example, interprets this as a counter-cultural element in the light of Judith's independence:

> Although by the end of the narrative Judith had retreated from the centre stage of Israelite politics, she remained active and assertive. She did not marry and have children... At the end of her life...she distributed her property herself...and she set her maid free. She remained the autonomous figure [that she was prior to returning to her home].[127]

As Klopper so beautifully puts it, 'Interpretation is all we have'.[128] This is a position of radical humility. We therefore need to avoid making pronouncements in objective-type speech without looking at the internal and personal circumstances that engender them. We should not forget that our supposedly objective approach may be just as dangerous as the patriarchy we are trying to shield people from.[129]

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[123] Nadar, 'Toward a Feminist', 90-91.
[124] Patte, *Ethics*, 101-107.
[125] West, 'The Vocation', 307-36.
[126] Cornelius, 'An Interpretation', 251.
[127] Sawyer, 'Gender Strategies', 23.
[128] Klopper, 'Interpretation', 88.
[129] Schüssler Fiorenza, 'The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation', 10.

Sixth, we need to avoid making overt judgments on *Judith* and HB texts for all the reasons referred to. Primarily, we need to remember that these texts were not written in the modern era. To co-opt or dismiss them according to modern concerns entails an act of un-caring injustice against them, against ourselves, and against our various publics.

Chapter 9

The Function of the Speeches and Prayers in the Books of Judith

Barbara Schmitz

Structural analyses are often unpopular because they are viewed as 'dry' and preliminary work. Caution is advisable, however, as the seemingly impartial analyses of the composition and structure of narratives can have implications which are not directly recognisable, but can set the course for the whole of the interpretation: certain aspects are emphasized or highlighted, while others are hardly taken into consideration. Structure can thus significantly influence the interpretation of texts, as well as one's perception of the characters.

The reception history of *Judith* shows that Judith is always perceived as a beautiful woman: beautiful and dangerous. This interpretation of the protagonist is not only the result of (male) fear of (beautiful and decidedly dangerous) woman, but also of a reading that first of all follows the storyline. In this essay I will therefore reconsider the composition of *Judith* and the implications of various structural analyses for interpreting its protagonist, Judith (and, to a much lesser extent, her maid). In Section 1, I will discuss the book's twofold structure: a first structure according to the storyline, and a second structure according to the speeches and prayers in the book. Section 2 will focus on the different profiles of Judith that result from these different structural analyses. Section 3 will ask for the implications of the two different structures for an understanding of the protagonist Judith and — perhaps — offer a new approach to the (presumably unanswerable) question: 'What shall we do with Judith?'[1]

1. The Double Structure of the Book

Most structural analyses of *Judith* focus on its narrative structure.[2] Despite their differences with regard to details, these analyses often share the view that the

[1] Pamela J. Milne, 'What Shall We Do with Judith? A Feminist Reassessment of a Biblical "Heroine"', originally in *Semeia* 62 (1993), 37-58; in this volume, 117-36.

[2] See, e.g., two new commentaries on *Judith*: D.L. Gera, *Judith* (Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 3-10; and B. Schmitz and H. Engel, *Judit* (HThK.AT; Freiburg: Herder, 2014), 45-50.

crucial point of the narrative is the introduction of the protagonist, Judith, at the beginning of ch. 8. According to these analyses, Judith first appears halfway through the book, thereby introducing its long second part (Jdt. 8–16).

This is a crucial point for the analysis of the *narrative*: the book indeed falls into two distinctive sections: chs. 1–7 and chs. 8–16. Beyond this consensus, there are different proposals for a more detailed structure. Zenger[3] and Engel,[4] for example, emphasize the structural importance of ch. 8, and divide the book into three parts: chs. 1–3, chs. 4–7 and chs. 8–16. By contrast, Craven[5] divides the book into two larger parts: chs. 1–7 and chs. 8–16, a structure in which she identifies a chiastic pattern.

The structural importance of ch. 8 is justified not only by the first appearance of the protagonist, Judith, but also by the analogous construction of the opening verses of chs. 8 and 1,[6] since the beginning of the book's second part replicates, on the structural level, the beginning of its first part.[7] Furthermore, the first half of the book can be divided into two parts (chs. 1–3 and 4–7). This division also results from the introduction of a new group of characters, the Israelites, and the verb 'to hear': 'and the Israelites heard' (καὶ ἤκουσαν οἱ υἱοὶ Ισραηλ). Whereas in chs. 1–3 Nebuchadnezzar and the Assyrians are the only acting *and* speaking characters, in ch. 4 the reader's perspective changes due to the introduction of the new group, the 'Israelites'.

The preceding outline focuses on the narrative structure of the book and has two crucial turning points. The first is the Bethulians' misery in ch. 7: the siege of Bethulia has left the people so desperate and in fear for life and limb that they publicly demand capitulation to Holofornes and plead for submission to him. The city's elders then delay this demand by means of a five-day ultimatum. After

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[3] E. Zenger, *Das Buch Judit* (JSHRZ, I/6; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1981), 432-33.

[4] H. Engel, '"Der HERR ist ein Gott, der Kriege zerschlägt": Zur Frage der griechischyen Originalsprache und der Struktur des Buches Judith', in *Goldene Äpfel in silbernen Schalen* (ed. K.-D. Schunk and M. Augustin; BEATAJ, 20; Frankfurt: Lang, 1992), 155-68 (159-64).

[5] T. Craven, 'Artistry and Faith in the Book of Judith', *Semeia* 8 (1977), 75-101; and T. Craven, *Artistry and Faith in the Book of Judith* (SBLDS, 70; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983).

[6] For a different opinion see J.W. van Henten, 'Judith as Alternative Leader: A Reading of Judith 7–13', in *A Feminist Companion to Esther, Judith and Susanna* (ed. A. Brenner; FCB, 7; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 224-52. See also van Henten in this volume, 226-51.

[7] 1.1 begins with a time specification and introduces Nebuchadnezzar. The sentence is then interrupted by a long description of Nebuchadnezzar's enemy, Arphaxad (1.1-4), and proceeds with the time specification 'and it was in those days' (ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις) in 1.5. Similarly, 8.1 recommences with a new character, Judith, and the time specification, 'and Judith heard in those days' (καὶ ἤκουσεν ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις Ιουδιθ). What Judith hears is not indicated at this point; instead, the sentence is interrupted by a long introduction of Judith (8.2-8). The sentence then proceeds in 8.9 by beginning again with 'and she heard' (καὶ ἤκουσεν).

this low point the story resumes in ch. 8 with the introduction of the protagonist, Judith. By contrast to the first turning point, the second turning point is a high point: Judith kills Holofernes (ch. 13), thereby saving not only Israel but the whole world that is now liberated from Nebuchadnezzar's claim of sole supremacy and demand for worship as a divinity.

To divide *Judith* into three parts (chs. 1–3; 4–7; 8–16) is a convincing structure from a narratological point of view. But this structure neglects the speeches and prayers, which take up more than a third of the whole narrative (2.5-13; 5.3–6.9; 8.9-36; 9.1-14; 11.1-23; 16.1-17). Therefore, the book may also be structured by focusing on its long speeches and prayers. An analysis of these speeches and prayers shows that they are theological.[8] These neglected, but important parts of the book raise the necessity to examine anew the meaning and function of the speeches and prayers in the structure of *Judith*.

There are numerous interconnections among the six speeches and prayers. Such interconnections concern motifs, words, lexemes and topics. Two speeches by Judith occupy centre stage in the book: her speech before the Bethulian elders (8.9-36) and her prayer (9.1-14). Both speech acts are performed on the rooftop of her house, and are closely linked by their theology of history, creation and temple. Both speak of the history of the people of Israel.

First, Judith singles out negatively those forefathers of Israel who did not keep allegiance to the one God, YHWH, but worshipped many gods (8.18-19). Then, she mentions Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as positive examples: they experienced times of trial without forsaking God, and therefore serve as role models for the Bethulians (8.25-27). Double-coded as Dina and Simeon (Gen. 34), Judith — by prayer — takes on the role of threatened woman *and* saviour in 9.2-4. Her announcement that Israel will be saved by her hand (8.33) is echoed in 9.9-10.

Second, both texts (8.9-36 and 9.1-14) are characterised by a wisdom-based theology of creation that aims to establish and demonstrate the omnipotence of God. How the limited perception of human beings results in an incomplete knowledge of God is addressed in 8.13-14. God, the creator of all things, cannot be fathomed or evaluated by human beings. This assertion, made at the beginning of Judith's speech, is repeated at the beginning of her prayer (9.5-6) after a brief historical reminder regarding Dinah and the Shechemites (9.2-3). Judith praises God as the universal creator who not only shaped the past but also has a plan to shape the future. These thoughts are echoed in her praise of God at the end of the prayer (9.11-12).

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[8] See B. Schmitz, *Gedeutete Geschichte. Die Funktion der Reden und Gebete im Buch Judit* (Herders Biblische Studien, 40; Freiburg: Herder, 2004), 418-81; and B. Schmitz, 'Vor-Denken und Nach-Denken. Die Funktion der Reden und Gebete im Buch Judit', in *Prayer from Tobit to Qumran* (ed. R. Egger-Wenzel and J. Corley; DCLY, 1; Berlin: de Gruyter 2004), 220-40 (221-29).

Third, both texts share an emphasis on the temple and the land: Judith's description of the Bethulians' proposed surrender to the Assyrians and its possible consequences has its focal point in the fear for the temple's desecration (8.20-23). This thought is echoed and developed in 9.8 and 9.13.

Judith's speech in ch. 8 and her prayer in ch. 9 provide the theological reflections that are crucial for her actions; they are theologically the finest texts in the narrative. 'Theologically the finest part of the Book is Judith's speech in chapter 8, which does not come short of the book of Job in its depth of faith and insight'.[9] In other words, ch. 8 becomes the turning point in the narrative structure; 'Not the slaying of Holofernes, but its motivation, turns the narrative. For the structure is, so to speak, broken-backed.'[10]

As Judith's speech before the Bethulian elders (8.9-36) and her prayer (9.1-14) share many aspects, so do also the dialogue between Holofernes and Achior (5.3–6.9), and the dialogue between Holofernes and Judith (11.1-23). Both dialogues take place before Holofernes (in his tent) and have a similar outline.

a) Holofernes' preliminary speech (5.3-4; 11.1-4).
b) The speeches of Achior and Judith (5.5-21; 11.5-19).
c) The reaction of the audience (5.22, 23-24; 11.20-21).
d) Holofernes' closing speech (6.2-9; 11.22-23).

The respective scenes end with Achior's and Judith's undergoing a reversed location change: Achior, coming from the Assyrian camp, is extradited to Bethulia (6.10); and Judith, coming from Bethulia, is allowed to stay in the Assyrian camp (12.1). Both Achior's and Judith's speeches serve to analyse the military situation and advise Holofernes according to their analysis. Moreover, in her speech to Holofernes, Judith refers to Achior's speech and confirms his statements (11.9-10). Both speeches begin with a *captatio benevolentiae* in that both speakers ask Holofernes to respond to their words in a positive manner. Both speeches contain topoi of self-abasement (5.5; 11.5), and both speakers assure Holofernes that they speak the truth (5.5; 11.5-6). Judith wants Holofernes to believe that she is a defector who has fled from Bethulia because Israel has sinned before God (11.11-15). While Holofernes believes the words of the beautiful Judith, he accuses his honest male advisor Achior of being a hireling and false prophet (6.2). By contrast, Judith presents herself as a prophet who is able to assure Holofernes of correct decisions and the benevolence of God (11.16-19). Achior addresses Holofernes as 'my lord' (ὁ κύριός μου) in 5.5 and

[9] J.C. Dancy, *The Shorter Books of the Apocrypha* (The Cambridge Bible Commentary; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 80.

[10] M. Stocker, 'Biblical Story and the Heroine', in *The Bible as Rhetoric: Studies in Biblical Persuasion and Credibility* (ed. M. Warner; London: Routledge, 1990), 81-102 (88).

5.21, and as 'master' and 'lord' (δέσποτα κύριε) in 5.20. Judith addresses Holofernes as δέσποτα κύριε in 11.10 but otherwise uses the phrase 'my lord' (ὁ κύριός μου) in an ambiguous manner (11.5, 6, 11, 17). While Holofernes is made to think that this phrase refers to him, the readers are able to discern that it refers to the God of Israel.

Furthermore, both dialogues (5.3–6.9; 11.1-23) are framed by Nebuchadnezzar's speech at the beginning of the narrative in 2.5-13 and by Judith's hymn at the end of the narrative (16.1-17). While Nebuchadnezzar's speech prospectively outlines his plan to conquer the West (2.5-13), Judith's hymn retrospectively interprets what and how this happened. Whereas Nebuchadnezzar uses the *Botenformel* (2.5) and thereby presents himself as a messenger and prophet — with his claim for being a divinity becoming implicitly clear (explicitly, in 3.8, 6.2), Judith looks back on what occurred and interprets it from her point of view (16.2-12). The second part of Judith's hymn (16.13-17) emphasizes the omnipotence of the one God, YHWH, and his reign over nature and history by drawing on the following elements: a theology of creation (16.14), motifs of theophany (16.13-17), a theology of sacrifice (16.16) and terminology of judgment (16.17). With that, the hymn of Judith in ch. 16 represents the antithesis to Nebuchadnezzar's claim to world supremacy and divinity in ch. 2.

These observations show that the speeches and prayers create their own concentric level of suspense within the narrative. At the highest point of the dramatic arc we find Judith's speech (8.9-36) and prayer (9.1-14). These passages are flanked by two dialogues: one between Holofernes and Achior (5.3–6.9), and the other between Holofernes and Judith (11.1-23). In turn, these dialogues are framed by Nebuchadnezzar's speech (2.5-13) and Judith's hymn of praise to God (16.1-17).

2.5-13	Nebuchadnezzar's speech	
5.3–6.9	Dialogue between Holofernes and Achior	
	8.9-36	Conflict between Judith and the elders
	9.1-14	Judith's prayer
11.1-23	Dialogue between Holofernes and Judith	
16.1-17	Judith's song of praise	

With this alternative structure, new dimensions of the narrative emerge. A comparison of both structures — the narrative-based structure (1–3; 4–7; 8–16) and the one based on the book's speeches — shows two arcs of tension within the plot, which correspond to the two parts of the book. The description of hardship in Bethulia (ch. 7) is the low point of the first suspense curve, while the second curve reaches its climax in the killing of Holofernes (ch. 13). By contrast, the concentrically arranged speeches and prayers create a dramatic arc that

encompasses the whole book, and reaches its climax with Judith's theological speech and prayer in chs. 8-9. The concentrically arranged structure of the speeches and prayers, with its climax in chs. 8–9, relativizes the climax of the story as represented by the killing scene in ch. 13. An initial reading will be interested in the captivating plot and the unanswered question regarding the solution to the crisis, with a focus on the killing of Holofernes as the aim of the story. But reading the book a second time raises the issue of the narrative's theological dimension: in order to understand the plot, readers have to rely on the speeches and prayers. Then it becomes clear that the speeches and prayers reflect the events before they take place.

a) Nebuchadnezzar delivers his speech (2.5-13) and then Holofernes leaves from his presence (from 2.14).
b) Achior relates the history of Israel (5.5-21) before military measures are taken, against his advice (from 6.10).
c) Judith interprets the people's wish to surrender Bethulia in speech and prayer (8.9-36; 9.1-14) before taking action (from 10.1).
d) Judith outlines the alleged future events for Holofernes (11.5-23) before helping her people (from ch. 12).

The second structure, which is based on the book's speeches and prayers, highlights the significance of these speech acts for *Judith*. It also shows that the book shares a basic feature with Hellenistic historiography: at crucial turning points important characters are provided with speeches, in which the narrator's intention and the interpretation of the events are revealed. In light of Hellenistic historiography, the function of the narrative's speech acts may be understood as a means of interpreting fictionally told history ('interpreted history').

In summary, *Judith* may be structured in two different ways: one approach structures the book according to its storyline. According to this structure, the decisive point of the narrative is found in ch. 8 and divides the book into two parts: chs. 1–7, and chs. 8–16. A second approach structures the book according to its speeches and prayers.

2. Structural Analysis and Judith as Protagonist

Structural analyses entail more than the analysis of the structure and composition of a text; they shape our perception of texts and characters. While structural analyses emphasize certain aspects of the narrative, they also downplay others. This observation raises a question regarding the implications of the narrative's double structure: How does the dramatic arc of the speeches and prayers on the one hand, and the plotline arc on the other hand — in fact, the existence of a *dual* structure with *two* outlines — change the reader's perception of the characters, especially of Judith (and, to a lesser extent, her maid)?

The readers meet Judith, the 'Jewess/Judaean', for the first time in ch. 8.[11] The detailed presentation of this new character interrupts the story: all attention is now focused on her. Judith is introduced with a long genealogy (8.1) that traces her roots back to the progenitor of Israel. Furthermore, she is presented as a wealthy widow. Being a wealthy woman and a widow, Judith represents the freest status a woman can have in ancient society. She is independent and self-supporting. She does not have to submit legally to a father, husband or son. As a wealthy woman, she is able to choose her own lifestyle freely. It is thus by her own choice that her lifestyle is characterized by simplicity and a reclusiveness and is focused on God. Even so, her life of prayer and humility is not so much a sign of modesty but of wealth; Judith is able to live her life without being anxious about her daily income (8.4-6). This is a prerequisite for living a secluded life, actually an incredible luxury. Judith delegates the management of her possessions to another woman, who manages her agricultural holding (8.10). At her place of residence in Bethulia, the beautiful and God-fearing Judith is a woman with authority and is held in high esteem.

With this introduction, crucial prerequisites are established for Judith's involvement in the history of her people: she is free and independent. It is in this capacity that Judith implements her plan for saving Israel. She goes down into her house, prepares herself with the help of her maid (10.1-5) and sets out towards the gate of Bethulia (10.6-10). Having passed the gate, she proceeds through the ravine and the Assyrian camp to face Holofernes (10.11-23). She then arranges the conditions for her life within the camp (12.1-9), accepts Holofernes' invitation to a drinking bout on the fourth day and kills him on the very same night (12.10–13.10). Thereafter, she returns to Bethulia with her maid (13.11-20), dictates the order of the upcoming military attack against the Assyrians and has Achior summoned (14.1-10). She makes her way to Jerusalem with the men and women of Israel (15.12-14) and celebrates with them (16.18-20). Having done so, she returns to her independent life in Bethulia, without remarrying, until the day she dies (16.21-25).

The preceding summary shows that the storyline does not depend on the speeches and prayers, even though they are connected with and integrated into the context. They could be taken out of the narrative without a major loss to the storyline — but how would that change our perception of Judith?

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[11] See B. Schmitz, 'Casting Judith: The Construction of Role Patterns in the Book of Judith', in *Biblical Figures in Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature* (ed. H. Lichtenberger and U. Mittmann-Richert; DCLY, 2008; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 77-94 (80-84).

The literary structure of the narrative presents Judith as an active and energetic woman who, by means of her blinding beauty, is able successfully to implement her plan to save Israel and, with Israel, the whole world. This perception of Judith paints her as a valuable example from biblical literature of a woman who is resistant, independent and successful in her actions. This perception of the protagonist has often been evaluated negatively — mostly from a male perspective. Judith has been considered a dangerous and man-murdering *femme fatale*, from whom one needs to protect oneself. Art history presents us with many examples of this perception of Judith. For example, in Cristofano Allori's painting (1613), the beautiful and splendidly dressed Judith looks down on the beholder with disdain for the severed head of Holofernes that she holds in her left hand. Next to her stands her maid, who is portrayed as an older woman looking up towards her. Filippo Baldinucci's *Notizie de' professori del disegno* (the publication of which began in 1681) informs us that Judith has the features of Allori's mistress. That mistress is said to have left Allori at her mother's insistence, with the result that the mother was depicted as Judith's ugly maid. Allori identified himself with Holofernes, the will-less victim of a seductive and cruel beloved.[12]

Taking into account the dramatic arc created by the speeches and prayers, the perception of Judith would differ considerably. Following her introduction, Judith is characterized by her well-versed theological speech through which she — for theological reasons — strongly criticizes the Bethulian elders and the five-day ultimatum they have negotiated with the people. The elders have associated the ultimatum with the hope that God would finally intervene. Judith rejects this suggestion and emphasizes God's omnipotence as creator who can neither be comprehended nor fathomed (8.13, 14). In order to understand that God has not helped and saved the people of Israel and Bethulia so far, Judith draws attention to the history of Israel. She views God's actions within history as a series of tests (8.12, 25-27). By testing human beings, God gives them the opportunity to prove themselves: 'For he has not tested us, as he did them, to search their hearts; nor is he taking vengeance on us. Rather, the Lord scourges those who come near him so as to admonish them' (8.27). Furthermore, Judith emphasizes the difference between humans and God; therefore, God cannot be treated like a human being and cannot be forced to save his people (8.16). At the same time, this understanding not only means that humans should not provoke God to anger (8.14), but also that they can always place their hope in him (8.20). Since God

[12] See B. Schmitz, 'Trickster, Schriftgelehrte oder femme fatale? Die Juditfigur zwischen biblischer Erzählung und kunstgeschichtlicher Rezeption', *Biblisches Forum* 2004. Available online: www.bibfor.de/archiv/04.schmitz.htm (accessed 24 September 2014).

has the power to save and shield (8.15), he can intervene at any time because he hears the cries of his people (8.17) and does not disregard the needy (8.20). Judith emphasizes not only God's omnipotence but also his freedom and closeness to human beings; he proves himself 'the lord', 'our God' (κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν, 8.14, 16, 23, 25).

In her prayer (9.1-14), Judith draws attention to the history of Israel but evokes the deed of Simeon (9.2, 3-4). She asks God to intervene against the Assyrians as he has done against the Shechemites (9.9-10, 13). Nevertheless, she emphasizes that God is not a God of violence and war. Instead, with reference to Exod. 15.3 LXX, she characterizes God as a God who crushes wars (Jdt. 9.7-8; 16.2). Zeal (ζῆλος, 9.4), help (cf. βοηθός, 9.4, 11), foreknowledge (πρόγνωσις, 9.6), power (δύναμις, 9.8, 14), wrath (θυμός, 9.8; ὀργή, 9.9) and strength (κράτος, 9.9, 11, 14; ἰσχύς, 9.8, 11) are found with God and it is by these qualities that he takes a stand for the weak and lowly (9.11, 14). As in ch. 8, Judith emphasizes God's power as creator, his omnipotence and omniscience (9.5-6).

The elders who bear the political and military responsibility make the wrong political and military decisions because of their incomplete perception of God. Conversely, Judith unfolds her image of God and derives from it the necessary support for her intervention.

In her speech and her prayer, the well-informed Judith refers to the history of Israel. She calls to mind certain events and texts (e.g. Dina and Simeon, Gen. 34; Song of the Sea, Exod. 15.3 LXX), applies them to the current situation and draws conclusions for her analysis of the situation and the necessary actions to be taken. In this way, Judith proves herself as a knowledgeable exegete who is well-versed in Scripture. These aspects of her portrayal are solely evident through her speeches and prayers, and would not become evident without them. This means that the structural arrangement of the book according to its speeches and prayers is crucial for understanding Judith as an actively involved character, and for attaining an in-depth picture — possibly the decisive picture — of her.[13] By means of her speeches and prayers Judith is not presented as a beautiful woman only, but above all as a learned woman.[14] She is well-versed in the scriptures and traditions of her people (chs. 8; 9; 16) and is known as wise (σύνεσις, 8.29; σοφία, 8.29; 11.20), pious (εὐσεβής, 8.31; cf. θεοσεβής, 1.17) and God-fearing (8.8). She is Torah-observant (10.5; 12.2-3, 6-8, 15, 19; 16.21-24) and competent in the theology of wisdom. In this book Judith, the beautiful woman, is the only one who knows what to do and how to save Israel, not the Bethulian and Jerusalemite elders, traditionally considered the wise ones in the Jewish community.

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[13] For a similar evaluation see also Brison's essay in this volume, 175-92.

[14] L.B. Elder, 'Judith's Sophia and Synesis: Educated Jewish Women in Late Second Temple Period', in *Biblical and Humane* (FS J.F. Priest; ed. L.B. Elder, D. Barr and E. Struthers Malbon; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 53-70.

These observations give Judith's beauty a new meaning. Her beauty not only serves to win over Holofernes, but it also showcases her fear of God and her education (8.7-8; 11.21); this beauty comes solely from God (Wis. 13.3).[15] Judith is not able to perform her saving actions because of her beauty; her saving actions are based on her theological understanding and her fear of God.

In the character of Judith Torah observance, fear of God, and wisdom are combined. Her saving action[16] is portrayed as an expression of her fear of God and her wisdom, and made possible by her Torah observance. Against this background, Judith could be seen as a narrative realization of Ben Sira's ideal scribe (Sir. 38.24–39.11): wealthy and free of poverty (cf. Sir. 38.24), Judith is able to live according to her chosen lifestyle (Jdt. 8.4-8, cf. Sir. 39.5); she is well-versed in the biblical tradition, its interpretation and actualization (Sir. 39.1-3, cf. e.g. Jdt. 8.25-27; 9.2), and is also able to interpret the Scriptures and pray for the right attitude (Sir. 39.5-6). But there is one major difference between Judith and Ben Sira's ideal scribe: whereas Ben Sira's γραμματεύς is conceived of as male, the 'scribe' in *Judith* is a woman who has σύνεσις and σοφία at her disposal (Jdt. 8.29, cf. Sir 38.25; 39.1, 6, 7).[17] The closing remark of *Judith* comes as no surprise, although the remark is more than the common happy ending. Like the wise scribe, Judith is held in high esteem and respected throughout her lifetime, and her memory endures with future generations (Jdt. 16.21-25, cf. Sir. 39.9-11).

3. The Level of Action and Reflection in the Book

Judith has a particular compositional structure. On the one hand it has a literary (storyline) structure, while on the other hand it may be structured according to its speeches and prayers (Section 1). It was shown that these two structures accentuate different aspects of Judith: Judith the energetic, actively involved, beautiful and successful woman; and Judith the reflective, theologically well-versed and educated woman (Section 2). These aspects do not exclude but, on the contrary, influence each other: they are connected in a model of action that is, against the background of biblical literature, exceptionally distinguished. I would like to describe it as a theologically reflective, anthropocentrically orientated model of action. In her speeches and prayers, Judith emphasizes that

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[15] W.A. Dyrnesss, 'Aesthetics in the Old Testament: Beauty in Context', *JETS* 28 (1985), 421-32 (426-27).

[16] B. Schmitz, 'War, Violence and Tyrannicide in the Book of Judith', in *Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature* (ed. J. Liesen and P. Beentjes; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 103-19.

[17] B. Schmitz, 'Holofernes's Canopy in the Septuagint', in *The Sword of Judith: Judith Studies across the Disciplines* (ed. K.R. Brine, E. Ciletti and H. Lähnemann; Cambridge: Open Book, 2010), 71-80.

God is involved in history and that he has always saved his people. She shares this insight with the elders and probably with the people of Israel. According to the perspective of the elders and the people of Israel, however, God does not fulfill this claim. He simply does not intervene on behalf of his oppressed people! This creates the impression that God has sold his people into their enemies' hands (7.25) — an understandable conclusion from their point of view. Judith's crucially reflective power is shown in the way she reverses the logic of this argument. According to her, God does not have to intervene; his will is beyond human control and he cannot be forced to intervene (8.12, 15). Instead of waiting for God to intervene, Judith argues that their situation is one of testing (8.25-27), and through the test they are being encouraged to act and intervene. Judith does not expect God to intervene in a *deus ex machina* manner, as the elders seem to do with their five-day ultimatum. Two aspects are noteworthy. First, God no longer intervenes — at least not in a way noticeable by human beings. That he has heard the cries of his people and sees their need is known only to the readers (Jdt. 4.13). This means that all the characters, including Judith, act without knowing that God has already seen the need of his people. Second, unlike other examples in biblical literature, human beings are forced to act without being specifically commissioned or instructed by God to do so. Judith is instructed neither by a vision nor by hearing about what should be done to save the people. It is Judith's theological education (ch. 8) and her prayer (ch. 9) that enable her to develop a plan for her future actions. This is why the prayers are of great importance in the crucial situations within the book: not only for portraying Judith as a woman who is well-versed in Scripture, but also as theological reflections that enable and support her saving actions.

Using this model of action, *Judith* reflects — in Hellenistic times — how one can imagine the involvement of God in history when it was already implausible to imagine his direct intervention. This book is concerned with answering the question: How can human beings act in fear of God and take responsibility in situations of extreme distress? By making the absence of God a subject of discussion, and by offering an answer by means of an anthropological model of action, *Judith* proves to be almost modern in its reasoning.

Chapter 10

Judith: A Pious Widow Turned *Femme Fatale*, or More?

Ora Brison

Preface and Background

Judith presents its eponym Judith as an ideal Jewish Heroine.[1] It is difficult to date the book due to the mixed historical events, geographical locations and names of the people mentioned. These were taken from various sources that were probably written at different times.

Judith is presented as a figure with a mixture of conflicting characteristics. On the one hand, she is portrayed as a respected, wealthy, beautiful, independent woman along with a most impressive lineage, high social status and sexual charm; and on the other hand, as a solitary, ascetic and pious widow.

The background of Judith's story is the military campaigns of the Assyrian [*sic*] king Nebuchadnezzar and the siege his military commander Holofernes places around Judith's town, Bethulia, which is blocking his path to Jerusalem (chs. 1–7). Judith hears about the town leaders' decision to surrender to the Assyrians, due to the drought and lack of water, and is determined to save her townspeople. In order to do so, she goes out to the Assyrians' camp and presents herself to the military commander as God's messenger. Holofernes is tempted both by her beauty and her words promising him a victory over the Israelites with God's help. Holofernes invites Judith to a festive meal in order to seduce her but, while he is drunk and asleep, she takes his sword, kills him, cuts off his head, puts it in her food basket and returns to her town. Thereafter she encourages the Israelites to fight the weakened Assyrian army, thus leading them to victory. She is praised and blessed by all the Israelites, and after a pilgrimage to Jerusalem returns to her home and her solitary life.

[1] The English translation of the *Judith* text in this essay is based on the RSV unless otherwise stated.

Judith takes place during a time of war and presents some fascinating figures, dramatic events and interesting characteristics, including ironic and humorous elements woven deliberately into the plot.[2] Some commentators believe the book was written during the Persian period, as were *Esther* and *Daniel*.[3] Others[4] include it in the corpus of Hellenistic literature written during the Hasmonaean period, such as the books of Maccabees.[5] Dancy finds Hellenistic influences and maintains that some characteristics of the archetypal Greek tragic heroine might be found in Judith's portrayal.[6]

The literary theme describing a feminine figure at the center of wartime stories is found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (HB), as well as in the literature of the ancient Near East: the prophetess Deborah and Jael the Kenite (Judg. 4–5), and the Ugaritic goddess 'Anat in the Ba'al cycle (*CTU* 1.3, 1.4) are pertinent examples. VanderKam adds that the story includes not only dramatic elements such as sex, violence and death, but also a woman protagonist who acts independently in a world dominated by men.[7]

Judith's image and particularly her behaviour in the scene of Holofernes' killing have established her in interpretation as an archetypal *femme fatale*. Her numerous and various representations in literature, music, drama and the visual arts make her one of the most known such female figures of the Christian canon in Western culture.[8]

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[2] Linda Day, 'Faith, Character and Perspective in Judith', *JSOT* 26 (2001), 71-93 (71).

[3] Carey A. Moore, *Esther: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (AB, 7B; Garden City: Doubleday, 1971); Jon D. Levenson, *Esther: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997).

[4] Abraham Kahana, 'Book of Judith', in *The Apocrypha*, vol. 2 (ed. A. Kahana; Tel-Aviv: Massada, 1956), 348-76 (348-53) [Hebrew]; Jehoshua M. Grintz, 'Judith, Book of', in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 10 (Jerusalem: Keter, 1978), 451-59; Athalya Brenner, 'Introduction', in *A Feminist Companion to Esther, Judith and Susanna* (ed. A. Brenner; FCB, 7; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 11-25 (11).

[5] On the scholarly debate about *Judith* see also Jehoshua M. Grintz, *The Book of Judith* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1957), 4-28 [Hebrew]. Concerning that debate, it is worth noting that the book is neither mentioned by Philo and Josephus, nor found among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

[6] John C. Dancy, *The Shorter Books of the Apocrypha* (The Cambridge Bible Commentary of the New English Bible; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 70.

[7] James C. VanderKam, 'Introduction', in *'No One Spoke Ill of Her': Essays On Judith* (ed. J.C. VanderKam; SBL Early Judaism and its literature, 20; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 1-4 (2).

[8] On Judith's image in the fine arts, see Mieke Bal, 'Head Hunting: "Judith" On the Cutting Edge of Knowledge', in Brenner, ed., *A Feminist Companion to Esther*, 253-85; and Kevin R. Brine, 'The Judith Project', in *The Sword of Judith* (ed. K.R. Brine, E. Ciletti and H. Lahnemann; Cambridge: OpenBook, 2010), 3-21, the latter with a collection of essays on the subject.

Review of Previous Scholarship

The heroine's multifaceted character is presented in a fashion that does not define her solely as an individual female figure, but combines a variety of representations of literary female archetypal models. Depending on different interpretations concerning Judith's complex figure, it can be shown that her image corresponds to a mixture of literary female types, such as woman saviour, warrior woman, *femme fatale*, wise woman and pious woman.

Enslin and Zeitlin suggest an allegorical interpretation, according to which Judith is the female image metaphor for the people of Israel as God's consort, similar to the recurrent metaphor presented in prophetic literature (for example Jer. 2.2; Ezek. 16.6-14; Hos. 2–3). Thus, Judith's personal narrative translates to the story of the Nation of an Israel that vanquishes its enemies with the help of its God.[9] Brenner suggests that Judith may be viewed together with Esther and Susanna,

> ...as though they are imaged as signifiers, representations, projections or metaphors for the Jewish community in exile, or as surrounded by actual and potential enemies.[10]

Most *Judith* interpreters agree that the female character signified by Judith, and the power of her erotic beauty used as a weapon to allure men, is what brings victory over the enemy.[11] Most of these interpretations describe Judith as the ultimate model of the *femme fatale*, a female figure able to bring disaster upon the men in contact with her.

White compares Judith to Jael and Delilah, and emphasizes the characteristics of sexual seduction, deceit and violence inherent in those female figures.[12] Shemesh suggests reading the narrative of Judith as a corrective to the narrative of Yael and Sisera.[13] Fuchs, Merideth, Niditch and Exum also focus on these features.[14] Bach presents elements and motifs that are shared in the stories of

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[9] Morton S. Enslin and Solomon Zeitlin, *The Book of Judith* (Jewish Apocryphal Literature, 7; Leiden: Brill, 1972), 337-59.

[10] Brenner, 'Introduction', 13.

[11] Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture and Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1992), 55-56, 340.

[12] Sidnie A. White, 'In the Steps of Jael and Deborah: Judith as Heroine', in VanderKam, ed., *'No One Spoke Ill of Her'*, 5-16.

[13] Yael Shemesh, '"Yet he committed no act of sin with me, to defile and shame me" (Judith 13:16): The Narrative of Judith as a Corrective to the Narrative of Yael and Sisera', in *Shnaton: An Annual for Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes, The Hebrew University, 2006), 159-77 (160) [Hebrew].

[14] Fuchs (Esther Fuchs, 'Who Is Hiding the Truth? Deceptive Women and Biblical Androcentrism', in *Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship* [ed. A.Y. Collins; SBL, 10; Chico, CA:

Judith and Abigail (1 Sam. 25).[15] Crawford maintains that Judith is the most powerful woman in the Bible as well as the most dangerous one, comparable to the 'strange' woman of Prov. 7.21-23, described as a seductive woman who leads men to their death.[16] Van Henten and Levine describe Judith as a model female figure, characterized by a gender role reversal.[17] Stocker portrays Judith as a sexual warrior.[18] There is a collective scholarly agreement that *Judith* has many similar elements and associative, parallel motifs with the stories of many other significant women in the HB such as Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Tamar, Miriam, Deborah, Naomi and Ruth. Brenner also finds similar aspects between Judith and woman figures in postbiblical literature, such as Hannah in *Maccabees*, *Susanna* and the widowed prophetess Anna in Lk. 2.36-38.[19]

Based on Judith's eloquence and power of persuasion as well as her resourceful, authoritative behaviour and leadership skills, some commentators see her as a variant of the 'wise woman' model, as portrayed in 2 Samuel 14 and 20.[20] Ackerman notes that Judith is portrayed as the mastermind whose strategies lead to the defeat of Holofernes and his Assyrian army.[21] Others see Judith as a

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Scholars Press, 1985], 137-44); Merideth (Betsy Merideth, 'Desire and Danger: The Drama of Betrayal in Judges and Judith', in *Anti-Covenant: Counter-Reading Women's Life in the Hebrew Bible* [ed. M. Bal; JSOTSup, 81; Bible and Literature Series, 22; Sheffield: Almond, 1989], 63-78); Niditch (Susan Niditch, 'Eroticism and Death in the Tale of Jael', in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel* [ed. P.L. Day; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989], 43-57); and Exum (Cheryl J. Exum, 'Murder They Wrote: Ideology and the Manipulation of Female Presence in Biblical Narrative', in *The Pleasure of Her Text: Feminist Readings of Biblical and Historical Texts* [ed. A. Bach; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990], 45-67).

[15] Alice Bach, 'The Pleasure of Her Text', in *The Pleasure of Her Text: Feminist Readings of Biblical and Historical Texts* (ed. A. Bach; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 25-44 (32-34).

[16] Sidnie W. Crawford, 'Esther Not Judith: Why One Made It and the Other Didn't', *Biblical Research* 18 (2002), 22-31.

[17] Jan Willem van Henten, 'Judith as Alternative Leader: A Rereading of Judith 7–12', in Brenner, ed., *A Feminist Companion to Esther*, 224-52; and Amy Jill Levine, 'Sacrifice and Salvation: Otherness and Domestication in the Book of Judith', in VanderKam, ed., *'No One Spoke Ill of Her'*, 17-30. Reprinted in Brenner, ed., *A Feminist Companion to Esther*, 208-23.

[18] Margarita Stocker, *Judith — Sexual Warrior: Women and Power in Western Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998). On the metaphor of the 'woman warrior' in Judg. 4, see Gale A. Yee, '"By the Hand of a Woman": The Metaphor of the Woman Warrior in Judges 4', *Semeia* 61 (1993), 99-132.

[19] Brenner, 'Introduction', 11-24.

[20] Enslin and Zeitlin, *Judith*, 180; Carey A. Moore, *Judith: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 40; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 52-63.

[21] Susan Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen: Women in Judges and Biblical Israel* (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1998), 51.

mirror image of Esther.[22] Zeitlin discusses the emphasis on the religious theme, totally absent from the Jewish, canonical *Esther*.[23] From a different angle, Lacoque proposes that the book describes Judith as a religious, pious woman and a symbol of faith and sacrifice.[24] Likewise, Dancy compares her unwavering faith in God to that of Job.[25]

An Alternative Reading: Judith as an Intermediary

The perception of Judith as a *femme fatale*, also by feminist scholars, is probably influenced by the textual emphasis on her beauty, and probably also stems from the gender bias that so easily associates strong, independent and successful women with beauty and sexual seduction. Focusing on such an interpretive line may have prevented or deferred the exposure of other aspects in Judith's image.

According to my reading, Judith is a female model of an intermediary between the human and the divine. I will be suggesting that her conduct and activities ought to be perceived within the context of her religious persona. In spite of the commentators' virtual agreement that Judith is portrayed as a pious woman, the actual religious aspects attributed to her have received relatively little scholarly attention. I maintain that Judith's personal and public conduct is mainly related to the religious sphere; and it remains to be seen, after analyzing her actions, whether her definition as 'religious intermediary' can be articulated further. At any rate, remembering Judith merely as a *femme fatale* obscures her character as an authoritative, religious, heroic woman leader, for she embodies most of the religious and cultic roles in which the Israelite women may participate in the HB. Moreover, the killing of Holofernes should be viewed, within the context of Judith's piety, as an integral part of her extreme devotion to the worship of God, perhaps even as a cultic act, and not only as an expression of her loyalty to her community.

Unlike most ancient Near Eastern cultures, where women could have a priestly role,[26] no HB woman participates openly in priestly service in the same

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[22] John F. Craghan, 'Esther, Judith and Ruth: Paradigms for Human Liberation', *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 12 (1982), 11-19.

[23] Zalman S. Zeitlin, 'The Books of Esther and Judith — A Parallel', *Beit Mikra* 19 (1972), 337-59 [Hebrew] — although in LXX *Esther*, Esther is described as a pious woman.

[24] André LaCoque, *The Feminine Unconventional: Four Subversive Figures in Israel's Tradition* (Overtures to Biblical Theology; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 39.

[25] Dancy, *Shorter Books*, 99. For a comprehensive list of studies on *Judith*, see Toni Craven, 'The Book of Judith in the Context of Twentieth-Century Studies of the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books', *Currents in Biblical Research* 1 (2003), 187-229.

[26] For example, the *nadītu* priestesses of Shamash, the Mesopotamian sun god (Rivkah Harris, 'The Nadītu Woman', in *Studies Presented to A. Leo Oppenheim* (ed. E. Reiner; Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1964), 106-35.

capacity as the Levites and priests.[27] A close analysis of Judith's detailed activities, both in the private and in the public space, allows a wider glimpse of the customs and practices of the Israelites' spiritual and religious-cultic life, at least as they are portrayed. Such an inquiry into Judith's religious persona may also broaden our understanding and knowledge of a woman's place in biblical religious life and worship.[28]

A disclaimer seems to be in order at this point. In the HB, the boundaries between prophecy, divination, fortune telling, magic, healing and other concepts, and practices of spiritual communication with the divine, are not always clearly definable.[29] The same applies to the various religious and cultic specialists. Therefore, I use the vague and general terms 'religious', and at times 'cultic' in describing Judith as a female intermediary, or communicator, between the human and the divine.[30]

The Presentation of Judith and her Story

Judith is a wealthy, high-status widow who leads an ascetic life. Her religious practice includes celibacy, mourning, dietary customs, a certain dressing style and generally devout behaviour, both in the privacy of her home and in public.

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[27] In the HB priesthood is hereditary and priestly service is restricted to men only. The status of women from priestly families derives from their place in the family: a priest's daughter; a priest's wife.

[28] For this inquiry I will utilize several relevant studies, such as articles by Craven (Toni Craven, 'Artistry and Faith in the Book of Judith', *Semeia* 8 [1977], 75-101 [11-30]; and 'Convention and Tradition in the Book of Judith', *Semeia* 28 [1983], 49-61), claiming that Judith represents an ideal model of a believer; Van Henten (Jan Willem van Henten, 'Judith as a Female Moses: Judith 7–13 in the Light of Exodus 17, Numbers 20 and Deuteronomy 33:8-11', in *Reflections on Theology and Gender* [ed. F. van Dijk-Hemmes and A. Brenner; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994], 33-48), who compares Judith's character to that of Moses as described in the affair of the Water from the Rock in Massah and Meribah (Exod. 17.2-7); and Day ('Faith, Character and Perspective') who discusses the ambiguity of Judith's religious aspects.

In addition, I will take note of similar descriptions in the stories of the prophets Samuel and Elijah, and compare these to the story of Judith. The comparative analysis should contribute to a better understanding of the religious aspects of Judith.

[29] Karel van de Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel: Continuity and Change in the forms of Religious Life* (Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East, 7: Leiden: Brill, 1996), 206-35; Ann Jeffers, *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria* (Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East, 8; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 2-24.

[30] On religious specialists in the HB and the ancient Near East, see: Richard A. Henshaw, *Female and Male, the Cultic Personnel: The Bible and the Rest of the Ancient Near East* (Princeton Theological Monograph Series, 31; Allison Park: Pickwick, 1994); Lester L. Grabbe, *Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages: A Socio-Historical Study of Religious Specialists in Ancient Israel* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1995).

She is looked upon as a spiritual, pious woman who has the power to help her community by praying to God: 'So pray for us, since you are a devout woman, and the Lord will send us rain to fill our cisterns and we will no longer be faint' (Jdt. 8.31). She states her ability to be in contact with God and to receive messages through visions: '...and he will hear our voice, if it pleases him' (8.17); '...and I will pray to God and he will tell me...' (11.17); 'For this has been told me, by my foreknowledge; it was announced to me, and I was sent to tell you' (11.19). Her life revolves around purity, chastity and attempts to get closer to the sacred, perhaps to the point of religious zealotry.[31]

From a literary viewpoint, Judith's story has a circular structure consisting of three parts. The first part opens in the private space of her home, with her impressive genealogy and social status, followed by a description of her ascetic life as a chaste widow (8.1-8). The second (and main) part presents her in the public space. The plot unfolds with her meeting with the town leaders; leaving for the Assyrian camp; meeting Holofernes and killing him; returning to her town with Holofernes' severed head; giving advice and calling for war against the retreating Assyrian army; victory celebrations; the pilgrimage to Jerusalem; and, finally, Judith's return to Bethulia (chs. 9–16). In the third part, Judith is back in her domestic space, where she returns to her former life of chastity and celibacy, until her death (16.20-24).

Judith's Genealogy

Judith's story opens with a lengthy genealogy:

> ...she was the daughter of Merari, the son of Ox, son of Joseph, son of Oziel, son of Elkiah, son of Ananias, son of Gideon, son of Raphaim, son of Ahitub, son of Elijah, son of Hilkiah, son of Eliab, son of Nathanael, son of Salamiel, son of Sarasadai, son of Israel (8.1-2).[32]

One possibility for understanding this impressive list is that it is intended to neutralize the marginal place of a single, widowed woman (as Judith is presented in the story) in a traditional, androcentric society. The widow, like the orphan, the poor and the sojourner, was perceived as a vulnerable figure, on the margins

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[31] Judith shows extreme religious devotion and presents a kind of zealotry similar to that of Phinehas, son of Elazar, son of Aaron whom God describes: 'Phinehas,... has turned back my wrath from the people of Israel, in that he was jealous with my jealousy among them...' (Num. 25.11; KJV renders 'he was zealous'); the prophet Elijah, who says: 'I have been very jealous for the Lord ...' (1 Kgs 19.10, 14). For more on the subject of zealotry in the HB, see Jacob Licht, 'Jealousy, Zeal of the Lord, a Jealous God', in *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (ed. M.D. Cassuto *et al.*; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1976), 1:196-98. [Hebrew]

[32] On Judith's genealogy see Craven, 'Artistry and Faith', 85; Dancy, *Shorter Books*, 95; Craghan, 'Esther, Judith and Ruth', 17.

of society, with no family protection, and in need of help and support, as reflected in biblical law,[33] the Prophets[34] and elsewhere. An examination of Judith's genealogy shows that it includes names corresponding to and reminiscent of social elite officials and religious personae mentioned in biblical historiography. Merari is the third son of Levi, son of Jacob (Exod. 6.16), mentioned in various genealogies as one of the eponymous fathers of the Levites (for example, 1 Chron. 6.1; 9.14). Also listed are the names of biblical prophets, priests, scribes and judges such as Gideon the judge; Elijah the prophet; Ahituv the priest (1 Sam. 22.11); and Uzzi the priest (Ezra 7.4). The list ends with the name Israel (Jacob) — the eponymous father of the Twelve Tribes. So, Van Henten maintains that the long genealogy, with named figures representing the various tribes, has the purpose of presenting Judith as a feminine symbolic figure representing the tribes of Israel.[35]

Similar long genealogies can be found mainly in the so-called Priestly literature. Therefore, we can assume that the purpose of Judith's long genealogy (without discussing whether it is 'historically' true) is to present her high status and important position, and perhaps also to make a family connection between her and the Levites and the priests. Since the Levites and priests' genealogies are intended to substantiate their temple service credentials, Judith's list is perhaps designed to prepare the background for her own religious/spiritual position of authority. This will be presented further in the story.[36]

Religious Aspects of Judith's Conduct in the Domestic Space: Details

Mourning Customs[37]

Judith's mourning after her husband's death (Jdt. 8.5-6) shows that she acts according to conventional mourning customs. Nevertheless, her behaviour is more extreme than required. The customary period for mourning is seven days, as indeed her community mourns for her (Jdt. 16.24) and as mentioned elsewhere.[38] Therefore, her description, 'Judith had lived at home as a widow for three years and four months' (8.4) seems more like a permanent way of life than

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[33] Exod. 22.23-21; Deut. 24.17-21; 26.13-12; 27.29.

[34] Isa. 1.23; Amos 2.8; Jer. 7.1; Zech. 7.10; Mal. 3.5.

[35] Van Henten, 'Judith as a Female Moses', 34-35.

[36] Levine, 'Sacrifice and Salvation' (1992), 21.

[37] On mourning practices in the HB, see Saul M. Olyan, *Biblical Mourning: Ritual and Social Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 31-34.

[38] In Gen. 50.10; 1 Sam. 31.14; Sir. 22.12. Notably, Jacob's mourning for Joseph (Gen. 37.34-38) and the Israelites' mourning for Moses (Exod. 34.8) last longer than seven days.

a temporary mourning custom. (When she returns home after the victory celebrations, she resumes her ascetic life mode.) Furthermore, she moves to live in a kind of temporary tent or loft on the roof of her home (8.5);[39] wears widow's weeds like Tamar, wife of Er (Gen. 38.1); puts ashes on her head like Tamar, David's daughter (2 Sam. 13.19); and fastens a sackcloth on her person, like David and Joab (2 Sam. 3.31; and see Jer. 6.26). Judith also prays frequently and fasts: 'She fasted all the days of her widowhood, except the day before the Sabbath and the Sabbath itself, the day before the new moon and the day of the new moon, and the feasts and days of rejoicing of the house of Israel' (Jdt. 8.6), as does the widowed prophetess Anna (Lk. 2.36-38).[40]

Judith's long mourning and retirement is attributed to her grief over her husband's death. However, such extreme conduct may also be an indication of religious preparation, and a devotee's dedicated commitment to the worship of God (i.e. constant wearing of sackcloth may indicate an attempt to conceal her beauty and demonstrate her piety and modesty).

Some aspects of Judith's pious, ascetic life resemble the lifestyles of the priests, who, in God's service, had certain obligations, prohibitions and restrictions with regard to purity, food, clothing and marriage (e.g. Lev. 8 and 10).[41] Therefore, Judith's life of celibacy and abstinence is not necessarily confined to mourning customs as practiced in biblical Israel, but more of a way of indicating her desire to dedicate herself to God's service.

The Meeting with the Town Leaders (Judith 8.11-23)

Judith's first appears in the privacy of her home, at a meeting with Uzziah, Chabris, Charmis and other town elders. Having heard that the leaders have decided to surrender to the Assyrians and open the city gates to them, she sends an invitation to the leaders. In answer to her call, they quickly come to hear what she has to say. Judith opens the conversation with a reproof on their lack of faith in God: 'Listen to me... What you have said to the people today is not right; you

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[39] The roof appears to be a place for solitude (as in 1 Sam. 9.2), hiding (Josh. 2.6) and mourning (2 Sam. 2.1; Ps 102.8), and also for idol worship (2 Kgs 23.12).

[40] In Luke, Anna spends her days in prayer and fasting in the Jerusalem Temple (Lk. 2.37). Similar descriptions of prayer and fasting appear also in 1 Kgs 21.27: 'And when Ahab heard those words, he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about dejectedly'; Ezra 9.5: 'And at the evening sacrifice I rose from my fasting, with my garments and my mantle rent, and fell upon my knees and spread out my hands to the Lord my God'; and in Ps 141.2; 1 Macc. 2.1-14.

[41] On priesthood and priests in the HB, see Menachem Haran, 'Priesthood, Priest', in Cassuto *et al.*, eds., *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, 4:14-45 [Hebrew]; Frank M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (repr. 1997; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 195-215.

have even sworn and pronounced this oath between God and you, promising to surrender the city to our enemies unless the Lord turns and helps us within so many days' (8.11). She makes a long speech in which she uses verbs associated with hearing (8.17, 32): Hearing, listening to and communicating God's words appear to be a *leitmotiv* in the story.

In biblical literature, the verb designating 'hear' and 'listen' occurs in various declensions: שמע Qal means 'hear', 'listen' and שמע Hif. designates 'make heard, announce'. In Wisdom literature the Qal formation appears in the imperative form in the sense of commanding obedience and receiving the advice given by an authoritative figure (Prov. 1.8; 6.20; 31.1-9). The root appears frequently in the context of two main things required of a prophet: 'to *hear* the word of God without fear and *voice* it to the people without fright'.[42] While asking for attention, prominent biblical women use the same verb: so Rebekah (Gen. 27.13) and the Medium of En-dor (1 Sam. 28.22). The prophets often use forms of this verb in fateful and difficult times, for example in the words of Samuel to Saul, 'now listen to the words of the Lord' (1 Sam 15.1); Isaiah to Hezekiah, 'Hear the word of the Lord' (2 Kgs 20.16; 39.5), and Jeremiah to the prophet Hananiah, 'Yet hear now this word which I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people' (Jer. 28.5). Judith *hears* the words of the people and the leaders, and makes sure that they *hear* her reproof, in the hope that God would *hear* the voice of the people and that her prayers would be answered.

Judith views the siege as a trial: 'God is testing the people's faith' (Jdt. 8.25-26).[43] The meeting between her and the town leaders resembles other HB encounters of extraordinary women with religious or spiritual authority with high-status political leaders. As a result of such meetings various political, military, social and religious processes are initiated. Thus the prophetess Deborah summons Barak, appoints him the military leader of the war against the Canaanites and recruits the Israelite tribes to join the army, while Deborah herself gives the signal received from God for starting the war (Judg. 4–5). The prophetess Huldah has a major influence, as a supreme religious authority, on King Josiah's religious, cultic and social reform, a reform that follows her meeting with the delegation of priests, scribes and other dignitaries from the king's court who come to her for advice (2 Kgs 22.14-20). And the anonymous 'wise woman' of Abel Beth-Maacah saves her city from Joab's siege (2 Sam. 22.16-22).

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[42] Uriel Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narrative* (Biblical Encyclopaedia Library, 15; Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute, 1997 [Hebrew]), 67, emphasis mine.

[43] The references to the covenant with God, and Reward and Punishment, in *Judith*, are in line (at least partially) with the deuteronomistic school of thought (Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11* [AB, 5; New York: Doubleday, 1991]).

The circumstances of the town leaders' arrival at Judith's house, the conversation between the parties, the respect they show her and their acceptance — without question or reproach — of her mystery plan to save the town, all present Judith as an authoritative figure. This happens in a society in which women are excluded, as a rule, from positions of power, influence and authority in the public sphere.[44]

The most interesting element in the conversation between Judith and the town leaders, indicating her status and religious authority, is their request: 'So pray for us, since you are a devout woman, and the Lord will send us rain to fill our cisterns and we will no longer be faint' (Jdt. 8.31). This request has seldom been related to or commented on by scholarly interpreters. However, this request, together with additional elements that will be addressed here, are the main indicators presenting Judith as a woman who mediates between the human and the divine worlds. Moreover, that the leaders refrain from asking questions as to her secret plan probably shows that they accept her as a person with high spiritual capabilities.

Request for a Prayer to God for Rainfall

The Bible emphasizes God's control over the forces of nature and attributes rainfall to faith. In Lev. 26.3-4 we read, 'If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit'. This can also be seen in other sources.[45] A similar approach can be found in other cultures of the ANE, where rainfall is associated with the goodwill of the gods (especially the storm gods, such as the Ugaritic/Canaanite Ba'al and the Anatolian Teshub).[46] In the literature of those cultures we find many prayers, incantations and rituals, conducted by religious worship and divination specialists, asking the storm gods for rain.[47]

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[44] Craven, 'Artistry and Faith', 94.

[45] For example Jer. 5.24; 14.22; Joel 4.7; Zech. 10.1.

[46] On Storm gods in the ANE, see Daniel Schwemer, 'The Storm-Gods of the Ancient Near East: Summary, Synthesis, Recent Studies. Part II', *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 8 (2008), 1-44; Alberto R.W. Green, *The Storm-God in the Ancient Near East* (Biblical and Judaic Studies from the University of California San Diego, 8; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003).

[47] The God of Israel appears in various biblical texts as a storm god (especially in Pss. 29 and 68). In her victory song, Judith also describes God appearing as a storm god who controls nature, 'For the mountains shall be shaken to their foundations with the waters; at thy presence the rocks shall melt like wax…' (Jdt. 16.15).

Drought is described in the HB as punishment from God, mainly in association with idolatry. Worth noting in this context is the sudden appearance of the prophet Elijah in 1 Kgs 17.1 and his powerful declaration, 'There shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word'. Notably, there is a thematic resemblance of that drought and the slaughter of Ba'al's prophets (1 Kgs 18.18-42) to Judith's killing of Holofernes.

Thus, spiritual and magical abilities for causing rainfall might be associated with Judith. The use of magical practice for causing rainfall was generally accepted, as long as implemented in God's name. In both stories, Judith's and Elijah's, the ability to influence rainfall is accepted as evidence of their status as intermediaries who have singular connections with God.[48]

Judith is sure that the danger of drought and destruction threatening the people of Bethulia is not a punishment from God because they have been faithful to God and have not worshipped other gods. So she says:

> For never in our generation, nor in these present days, has there been any tribe or family or people or city of ours which worshiped gods made with hands, as was done in days gone by — and that was why our fathers were handed over to the sword, and to be plundered, and so they suffered a great catastrophe before our enemies (Jdt. 8.18-19).

She reprimands the town leaders for their erroneous interpretation of the situation. They willingly accept her reprimand and even exalt her. Uzziah says about her wisdom: 'Today is not the first time your wisdom has been shown, but from the beginning of your life all the people have recognized your understanding, for your heart's disposition is right' (8.29). But Judith ignores the leaders' request for prayer and suggests a different plan, a personal one, for saving the city. The leaders accept her plan immediately without asking for any details. After meeting with Judith, there is a change in the leaders' approach — if at the beginning of the conversation they want to ease the people's distress by surrendering to the Assyrians, they now want to take revenge on the enemy: 'Go in peace, and may the Lord God go before you, to take revenge upon our enemies' (8.35).

There is no explanation of Judith's motives for undertaking this saving mission. There is also no explanation as to why the leaders think she has a chance of success with a plan they know nothing about. The answer probably lies in Judith's religious practice, which can be better understood by observing and analyzing customs, rituals and other activities that she performs and affirms, and by her public recognition as an intermediary by the Bethulia community.

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[48] An additional, well-known postbiblical example is the rabbinic story of Honi, known for his ability to cause rainfall with his prayers (*Ta'an.* 3.8).

Additional Religious and Cultic Aspects

Judith's Prayer Practices

Before going to the Assyrian camp, Judith prepares herself both physically and spiritually. Her preparations include purification, removing her mourning clothes, adorning herself in 'her garments of joy' and all kinds of jewelry (10.3-4), and a prayer to God for success in her mission. She prays in accordance with the conventional prayers customary in a war context,[49] and falls to the ground[50] during the first prayer:

> Then Judith fell upon her face, and put ashes on her head, and uncovered the sackcloth she was wearing; and at the very time when that evening's incense was being offered in the house of God in Jerusalem, Judith cried out to the Lord with a loud voice... (9.1).

Then she tears her coat, a customary action during mourning and also known from mourning practices of other ancient Near Eastern cultures.[51] This action is used as a symbol of surrender and request for forgiveness too.[52]

Judith's prayers are described with great detail. One of the prayers' main characteristics is the use of common formulas. Craghan examines Judith's prayers (before going to the Assyrian camp), compares them to other prayers in the HB and the Apocrypha and finds that they are structured like prayers and hymns in Psalms.[53] Craven claims that Judith's prayers belong to the lament genre, having conventional elements and formulas such as an address to God, complaint, petition, expression of trust, assurance and vow.[54]

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[49] Her prayer is similar to Judah Maccabeus' prayer on the eve of his battle with the Syrian army (1 Macc. 3.18).

[50] Falling down before God during prayer was a known practice, and the HB describes it in association with, for instance, prayers by Moses (Deut. 9.18, 25) and Joshua (Josh. 7.6) (Grintz, *Judith*, 139).

[51] See Ps. 141.2; Ezra 9.5; 1 Macc. 2.1-14.

[52] Pninah Galpaz-Feller, *The Voice of Clothes: Clothing in the Bible* (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2008) [Hebrew], 56-75. The description of Judith's coat (9.1) is reminiscent of Samuel's coat (1 Sam. 2.19; 15.27; 28.14) and Elijah's coat (2 Kgs 2.13-14), and constitutes an intertextual associative link from Samuel and Elijah to Judith. More on this in the subsection entitled 'Judith's Clothes and Jewelry'.

[53] John F. Craghan, 'The Book of Judith', in *Esther, Judith Tobit, Jonah, Ruth* (ed. J.F. Craghan; Old Testament Message, 16; Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1982), 82.

[54] Craven, 'Convention', 53-59. The last two elements are missing in Judith's prayer (54).

Judith's Appeal to God

'God of my father' is a standard address formula in prayer, as in the Song of the Sea (Exod. 15.2). Judith addresses God as 'God of my father Simeon' (Jdt. 9.2), and 'God of my father, and God of the inheritance of Israel…' (9.12). Her words resemble those of the 'wise woman' of Abel Beth-Maacah (2 Sam. 29.19). Another common expression in Judith's prayers is 'the shield of Israel' (Jdt. 9.14: 'protects the people of Israel').[55] She also mentions the Temple, Zion and Jerusalem '…for they have planned cruel things against thy covenant, and against thy consecrated house, and against the top of Zion, and against the house possessed by thy children' (9.13). She glorifies God as governing the Cosmos: 'Lord of heaven and earth, Creator of the waters, King of all thy creation' (9.12). Interestingly, she says: 'O Lord God of my father Simeon, to whom thou gavest a sword to take revenge on the strangers who had loosed the girdle of a virgin to defile her…' (9.2). The reference to Simeon's sword and revenge is generally interpreted as pointing to Dinah's rape and the killing of the Shechem people by Simeon and Levi (Gen. 34).[56]

In the commentaries focusing on Judith as *femme fatale*, the Dinah affair is explained as a fearful reference to what might happen in Holofernes' tent. I suggest, however, a reading that focuses on the 'zealotry for God' motif: the reference to Dinah's rape can be read as a metaphor in which the people of Israel is a 'virgin' whom the 'foreigner' has captured and 'desecrated' (Gen. 34.2). Therefore, just as the Shechemites were punished by the two brothers in an act of vengeance motivated by zealotry for God (Jdt. 9.4), so will God punish the Assyrians. In this reading, Judith's allusion to Dinah's rape conveys the importance she attaches to revenge executed in God's name (9.4). Like her speech to the leaders, her prayer is filled with the themes of divine vengeance and violence.[57]

Judith then speaks, in prayer, of her personal and social status as a widow. This is similar to the way Hannah talks, in prayer, to God about her own social status as a barren woman, before she conceives a son (1 Sam. 2.1-11). Whereas Hannah has a personal request for sons, Judith asks for help and rescue for her town and for all her people. In this she resembles leaders, prophets and priests who pray to God for the whole community. She describes God's appearance as that of a mighty warrior who kills the heathens, then asks to be God's messenger: 'give to me, a widow, the strong hand to do what I plan' (Jdt. 9.9, NRSV). Her words show that she is aware of her status as a woman in an androcentric

[55] In the HB: 2 Kgs 17.20; Isa. 45.25; Jer. 31.35; Ps. 22.24.

[56] Craghan, 'Judith', 84.

[57] Day, 'Faith, Character and Perspective', 80.

traditional society and that if she, a woman, would lead to a victory over the enemy, this would also lead to the enemy's humiliation. Judith's expression, 'by the hand of a woman' (9.10), recalls the encounter between Jael and Sisera (Judg. 4–5) and Abimelech's death by the woman of Thebez (Judg. 9.54).[58]

All in all, both the content and the allusions in Judith's prayer present an image of a devout woman faithful to her religion, her people and her God. She does not ask anything for herself, and prays only for the saving of her people and God's holy places. This too might point to her public office as a religious authority.

Judith's Clothes and Jewelry[59]

Clothes and some clothing items serve as identity markers and indications of social status and profession, then and now. In *Judith*, clothes have a major significance. Judith's clothes project her multifaceted personality and behaviour, and present her as belonging to a religious, spiritual elite.

In the first part of her story, in her domestic space, Judith is a widow dressed in sackcloth: 'She...girded sackcloth about her loins and wore the garments of her widowhood' (Jdt. 8.5). Prior to her prayer, she tears her coat (9.1). A coat is a luxury garment and identified with the social elite.[60] It is a hallmark of the prophet Samuel (1 Sam. 2.19) and identifies the prophet Elijah (2 Kgs 2.14). A coat is also mentioned in association with Saul and Jonathan (1 Sam. 18.4; 24.4, 11); King David (1 Chron. 15.27); Tamar, daughter of David (2 Sam. 13.18); the leaders of several nations (Ezek. 20.16); and Ezra (Ezra 9.3). Notably, the coat is frequently described as an item worn by temple personnel (1 Sam. 2.18; 22.18) and priests (Exod. 28.4, 31; 39.24-26).[61]

For her return to the public sphere and for her encounter with Holofernes, Judith puts on luxurious clothes and adorns herself with precious jewelry. Her hair is mentioned several times; for example: 'She removed the sackcloth she had been wearing, took off her widow's garments, bathed her body with water, and anointed herself with precious ointment. She combed her hair, put on a tiara, and dressed herself in the festive attire that she used to wear while her husband Manasseh was living' (Jdt. 10.3, NRSV). Her hair ornaments are reminiscent of

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[58] On the 'hand' motif, see Patrick W. Skehan, 'The Hand of Judith', *CBQ* 25 (1963), 94-110.

[59] On clothing in *Judith* see also Brenner-Idan and Van Henten in this volume, 212-25 and 226-41 respectively.

[60] Shmuel Yeivin, 'Clothing', in Cassuto *et al.*, eds., *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, 4:1034-45 (1044) [Hebrew].

[61] The 'ephod coat' too has ritual significance and is one of the clothing items worn by the chief priest (Exod. 28.31; 29.5).

the headpieces of the priests, which are part of their cultic apparel.[62] The chief priest wore a cap, whereas other priests wore hats, all headpieces made of expensive cloth (Exod. 39.28). Judith also has jewelry, accessories and ornaments: 'She put sandals on her feet, and put on her anklets, bracelets, rings, earrings, and all her other jewelry. Thus, she made herself very beautiful, to entice the eyes of all the men who might see her' (Jdt. 10.4, NRSV). Jewelry, although used as a fashionable accessory, was generally worn at ceremonies, feasts and rituals. To some of these items, magical qualities were attributed.[63]

The detailed description of Judith's clothes and jewelry is clearly intended to present her as an impressive figure. The description can be interpreted as preparation for certain cultic activities. Judith's dressing and adorning is mentioned once more before her fatal encounter with Holofernes: 'So she got up and arrayed herself in all her woman's finery…' (12.15). It may seem that her garments, hairdo and jewelry are intended for sexual temptation. It is, nevertheless, possible to see all these in a context of status and religious-cultic practices. Similar descriptions appear in stories and myths of warrior goddesses in the ancient Near East. It is, moreover, far more likely that a chaste and devout woman (as Judith is portrayed throughout the book) would dress up for spiritual rather than for carnal activities. Judith's detailed procedure of dressing and adorning, prior to her meeting with Holofernes, indicates that she probably considers this activity an important contribution for the success of her mission. I propose that this procedure is also symbolic for her, a kind of rite of passage.[64] A woman living a solitary, ascetic life, leaves the safety of her home and goes out on a dangerous mission into the public sphere. She seems to be preparing herself for a ritual through purification and praying, without knowing the outcome, or whether she will die in the process. All through her mission, Judith seems to be assuming that God wishes to use her to bring victory to the Israelites.[65]

The Encounter with Holofernes

The encounter between Judith and Holofernes takes place at the entrance to his tent in the Assyrian camp. The meeting is a mirror image of the meeting between Jael and Sisera (Judg. 4.18-22), thus serving as a clue to the final

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[62] These items are similar to those described in Mesopotamian and Anatolian cult rituals: Ada Taggar-Cohen, *Hittite Priesthood* (Texte der Hethiter, 26; Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 2004), 55-59.

[63] Renata Rosental, 'Jewelry', in Cassuto et al., eds., *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, 8:546-66 [Hebrew].

[64] On *rites de passages* see Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (trans. M.B. Vizedom and G.L. Caffee; repr. 1965; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1908).

[65] Day, 'Faith, Character and Perspective', 85.

outcome. Holofernes comes out to meet Judith, she bows, and he says: 'Do not be afraid…' (Jdt. 11.1); Jael uses the same expression with Sisera. Sisera enters Jael's tent, where she serves him a drink; Judith enters Holofernes' tent and he offers her food and wine. She then communicates a message from God, promising Holofernes a victory over the Israelites. In my view, when Sisera turns to Jael after his defeat by the Israelites (Judg. 4–5) he wishes to consult the gods.[66] If this view is accepted, this makes it all the more essential to consider the similarities between the stories of Jael and Judith. This should be added to the common understanding that the acts of killing Holofernes and displaying his severed head to the people of Bethulia resemble Jael's killing of Sisera (by a blow to his head!), then displaying his dead body to Barak; and that in both encounters there are sexual phallic connotations and gender role reversal, since a woman kills the enemy's military [male] commander.

The first dialogue between Judith and Holofernes is not just small talk. Judith introduces herself as God's messenger. She emphasizes the divine aspect of her mission and tells Holofernes that she has received God's message: '…and God has sent me… I will pray to God and he will tell me… For this has been told me, by my foreknowledge; it was announced to me, and I was sent to tell you' (Jdt. 11.16, 17, 19). Her words, 'I will tell nothing false to my lord this night' (11.5), are ambiguous and sound like a prophetic oracle that might be given diverse interpretations.[67] As sometimes in the case of other prophetic oracles, Judith means one thing and Holofernes understands another. Holofernes listens carefully and his reply shows how impressed he is, not just by her beauty but also by her wisdom and spiritual power: 'Her words pleased Holofernes and all his servants, and they marveled at her wisdom… You are not only beautiful in appearance, but wise in speech' (11.20, 23). He assures her that if she succeeds in her prayers and brings him victory, he will make her famous in all of Assyria, 'and if you do as you have said, your God shall be my God, and you shall live in the house of King Nebuchadnezzar and be renowned throughout the whole world' (11.23). One may assume he means that Judith would become famous not only for her beauty but mainly for her spiritual power and the prophetic vision concerning his victory.

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[66] Ora Brison, 'Jael, *'eshet heber* the Kenite: A Diviner?', in *Joshua and Judges* (ed. A. Brenner and G. A. Yee; Texts@Contexts; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 139-60.

[67] In the HB, prophetic oracles are not usually received on demand but communicated on the initiative of the prophet or God's messenger: so a prophet approaches Ahab (1 Kgs 20.13), and Isaiah approaches Ahaz king of Judah (Isa. 7.3-9). In Mari, for example, many letters sent to King Zimrilim (1775–1761 BCE) were written by women who communicated oracles to the king (Abraham Malamat, *Mari and the Bible* [Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East, 12; Leiden: Brill, 1998]; and Jack M. Sasson, 'Mari Dreams', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103 [1983], 283-93).

Judith's Purification Practices

Judith is careful about purification and about dietary customs, not just in her home but also in the Assyrian camp (12.7-8). All her activities show that she is preparing herself, body and soul, for a climactic event.

- *Washing.* Every night Judith goes out from the Assyrian camp to a nearby spring to wash, purify and pray. Bathing for purification was known in all the neighboring cultures of the ancient Near East and is mentioned in the context of religious and cultic ceremonies. In the HB, the priests wash in preparation for rituals (for instance: Exod. 29.4; Lev. 8.6; Num. 19.7-8). Typically, a water source often exists where theophanies occur (e.g. Gen. 32.22-30).
- *Dietary practices.* Judith marks her otherness in relation to the Assyrians by her eating customs. She only eats the food she has brought with her, such as 'fine bread' (ἄρτος καθαρός, Jdt. 10.5). This is suggestive of the sacred bread in a temple, intended for offerings and eaten exclusively by those serving in the temple (1 Sam. 21.5-7).[68] Judith takes care not to eat or drink any 'foreign' food, in accordance with some HB dietary customs (Ezek. 4.13; Hos. 9.3-4; Dan. 1.8-16).
- *Impurity of cloth.* Judith separates herself from the Assyrians also by not lying down on Holofernes' bed-cover; instead, she uses a new fleece she got from Bagoas the eunuch. Her cautious behaviour is in accord with HB laws concerning textile impurity.[69]

These actions and observances can be interpreted as purification in preparation for the highest moment: the completion of Judith's mission by killing Holofernes.

The Killing

The killing of Holofernes is performed as a ritual act, accompanied by addresses to God.

In the first stage, Judith addresses God from the heart and asks for his assistance in successfully fulfilling her mission: 'O Lord God of all might, look in this hour upon the work of my hands for the exaltation of Jerusalem' (Jdt. 13.4). She grips Holofernes' sword in her hand, approaches his bed and grabs his hair: 'She came close to his bed and took hold of the hair of his head…' (13.7).[70]

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[68] Moore (*Judith*, 201) suggests that this is a special kind of pure food, related to ritual.

[69] Such as Num. 12.12; Lev. 6.20; 13.54-58; 15.17.

[70] Gripping (Greek δράσσομαι) is mentioned in the HB in the context of priests performing offerings (Lev. 2.2; 5.12; 6.8; Num. 5.26).

Holding Holofernes' hair can be interpreted as an act necessary for holding the head in order to sever it. However, this can also be understood as symbolic act of laying of the hands on the sacrifice's head while performing a speech act. This is also what the chief priest does as he sends the scapegoat to its death (Lev. 16.21).

In the second stage, Judith calls upon God: 'Give me strength this day, O Lord God of Israel' (13.7), then immediately kills Holofernes. (Most commentators explain that Judith asks God for physical strength to carry out the killing.) This call is similar to Samson's request: 'O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once...' (Judg. 16.28, KJV and RSV). The expression 'give me strength' here has dual meaning, parallel to God's blessing to Joshua, 'be strong and of good courage', upon Joshua's ordination as leader (Josh. 1.6, 7). The blessing involves both physical strength and moral support, so that Joshua may be able to function as a leader and observe the Torah. Similarly, the two stages of Holofernes' killing are carried out with a combination of the physical and the spiritual, much like a ritualized sacrifice or an act of magic that is accompanied by incantation and prayer.

Judith has probably planned the killing of Holofernes even before going to the Assyrian camp, as indicated by the mention of Simeon's act of vengeance. However, her appeal to God at the very time she is performing Holofernes' execution, justifying her deed by her wish to save Jerusalem — 'O Lord God of all might, look in this hour upon the work of my hands for the exaltation of Jerusalem' (Jdt. 13.4) — demonstrates extreme devotion to God as well as a certain over-zealousness. In her prayers, she emphasizes how her enemy is, as an idol-worshiping pagan, a threat to the worship of God in his Temple: 'Break their strength...bring down their power...for they intend to defile thy sanctuary, and to pollute the tabernacle where thy glorious name rests, and to cast down the horn of thy altar with the sword' (9.8). In ancient Near Eastern cultures, beheading the enemy and presenting the severed head to the people (as Judith does) symbolizes victory over the enemy while humiliating him, as in the beheading of King Saul, then the presentation of Saul and Jonathan's mutilated bodies on the wall of Beth-shan (1 Sam. 31.8-10). Shame and humiliation would certainly be even greater if the victor were a woman, as in the conversation between Deborah and Barak ('for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman' [Judg. 4.9]) and between Abimelech and his armour bearer ('...lest men say of me, "A woman killed him"' [Judg. 9.54]).[71]

[71] On the symbolic significance of mutilating enemy bodies and the sexual-phallic connotation of head injuries caused by women, see Tracy M. Lemos, 'Shame and Mutilation of Enemies in the Hebrew Bible', *JBL* 125 (2006), 225-41.

The killing of Holofernes presents Judith as a warrior and passionate saviour. Such portrayal is not characteristic of women in general[72] and especially not of Judith, who, in most of the story, is presented as a devout and modest woman. The way Judith plans and carries out the killing of Holofernes points to other ritual killings with a background of extreme zealotry (during war or distress in Israel). Such are the executions of Cozbi and Zimri by the priest Phinehas son of Eleazar (Num. 25.6-15), Agag the Amalekite by Samuel (1 Sam. 15.32-33) and the Ba'al prophets by Elijah (1 Kgs 18.36-41). One may, therefore, assume that killing Holofernes is a cultic act performed by a devout messenger of God, acting out of belief, zeal and devotion.

Victory Celebrations

Even after completing her mission, the killing of Holofernes and the victory over the Assyrian army, Judith is still presented as an intermediary between God and the people.

Judith organizes the victory celebrations and participates in them. She prays, sings a song of victory and thanksgiving, leads the Israelites in a triumphal march, makes a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and brings the spoils of war to the Temple.

Victory celebrations and religious ceremonies were part of the few religious official activities in which women participated and had a central and active place (Exod. 15.20-21; 1 Sam. 18.7; 2 Sam. 6.19; Ps 68.26).

Judith gives the women olive tree branches to prepare garlands and to wear on their heads while dancing the victory dances (Jdt. 15.12-13). She herself participates in and leads the triumphal march, as does the prophetess Miriam (Exod. 15.20-21). But, whereas in the victory celebrations over the Egyptians Miriam leads the women, Judith leads both women and men. Judith composes the victory/thanksgiving song and sings it, praising God for allowing victory over the enemy (Jdt. 16.1-17).[73] She describes God as a divine warrior and herself as His messenger.[74]

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[72] Jael and the woman of Thebez act spontaneously when the opportunity presents itself. Their killing acts do not seem pre-planned.

[73] Brenner (Athalya Brenner, *The Israelite Woman: Social Role and Literary Type in Biblical Narrative* [BibSem; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985]) notes that throughout HB literature, only few women are acknowledged and recognized for their literary abilities: Miriam, Deborah and Judith. The first two are of course defined as prophetesses (46).

[74] Moore (*Judith*, 23-36), Craghen ('Esther, Judith and Ruth', 11-19) and Dancy (*Shorter Books*, 124) compare Judith's victory song to Miriam's Song of the Sea and to Deborah's Song, and find many features that are shared in these songs.

Pilgrimage to the Jerusalem Temple

Pilgrimage to God's temple is a HB directive not restricted to men. Women participate in pilgrimages, bringing thanksgiving offerings (Exod. 35.22-27; 38.8; 1 Sam. 2.24). Therefore, Judith's pilgrimage to Jerusalem is not an extraordinary activity in itself, beyond serving as evidence of her faith and need to thank God in his own temple (Jdt. 16.18-20).

On the other hand, it is unusual that spoils are taken from Holofernes' tent and brought to Judith (15.11). According to the priestly ideology, all confiscated properties should be handed over to the priests: 'Every devoted thing in Israel shall be yours' (Num. 18.14; Ezek. 44.29). The dedication of money and plunder to God is mentioned several times in the stories of David (2 Sam. 8.11) and Jehoash (2 Kgs 12.19). Loot and plunder are also mentioned in Dinah's rape story (Gen. 34.27-29). In my opinion, the booty given to Judith is a kind of tithe (Heb. מעשר) usually given to priests. Bringing the spoils to Judith is another indication of her near-priestly status. Thereafter she goes to Jerusalem and donates the spoils she receives, together with the canopy she herself took from Holofernes, to the Temple.[75]

The Blessings

Uzziah the town leader, Joakim the chief priest, Achior and the elders of Jerusalem shower Judith with impressive blessings. Uzziah greets her: 'O daughter, you are blessed by the Most High God above all women on earth' (Jdt. 13.18). Uzziah indicates her high status among the women of the land, while Achior congratulates her: 'Blessed are you in every tent of Judah! In every nation those who hear your name will be alarmed' (14.7). Joakim the chief priest and the leaders also bless her before God: 'You are the exaltation of Jerusalem, you are the great glory of Israel, you are the great pride of our nation!... May the Almighty Lord bless you forever!' (15.9-10). It is worth noting that the emphasis on God's name appears seven times in the chief priest's blessing.

These blessings are different from blessings conferred on other women in the HB, Apocrypha, Second Temple Literature and New Testament, such as on Rebekah ('Our sister, be the mother of thousands of ten thousands; and may your descendants possess the gate of those who hate them!' [Gen. 24.60]); Naomi ('Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without next of kin' [Ruth 4.14]); Mary, mother of Jesus, whom Elisabeth greets in similar terms ('Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!' [Lk. 1.42]). The

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[75] Craven ('Artistry and Faith', 93-94) maintains that Judith's pilgrimage to Jerusalem and her donation of the plunder is a fulfillment of a vow she made before the killing of Holofernes, although the text does not mention it.

blessings to Rebekah, Ruth and Mary are related to the continuation of the dynasty. Judith and Jael are the only two women who are blessed for carrying out acts of violence: both, by their own hands, kill an enemy of Israel, an army leader. The killings facilitate victory and receive national acclaim.

Judith is blessed in the same way a [male] war hero winning a battle would be blessed. The women of Israel welcome her and dance in front of her (Jdt. 15.12), echoing the reception for Saul and David after the killing of Goliath and victory over the Philistines (1 Sam. 18.6-7). In the Vulgate, a line was added to Judith's victory song declaring a holiday to mark her heroism, similar to the Purim holiday announced in *Esther* to mark the salvation of Jewish communities in the Kingdom of Persia.[76]

Judith's Return to the Private Sphere

Judith's return to Bethulia after her pilgrimage (Jdt. 16.21-22) is not marked by her receiving a political, religious or higher social status. Unlike the HB 'returning hero' who is usually awarded a more prominent position in public life after a victory (like Gideon [Judg. 8.22] or Jephthah [Judg. 11.9-10]), Judith returns to her home life of celibacy and austerity. The attitude toward her, and the reward she receives as a victorious war heroine, is ultimately different to those of a male hero. Her future life would be different too, unlike that of a male enjoying his hero status.

Women associated with ritual religious activity are generally described in the Judeo-Christian canon and in other ancient Near Eastern civilizations as virgins, widows or old women, that is, as stereotypically non-sexual. Since the family is the basis of patriarchal, androcentric ideology, such women, associated with religious and cultic practices, are placed on the fringes of society. A woman who leads the stereotypic life of wife and mother will generally not be associated with gender-reversed, independent or authoritative roles, as is Judith. From the literary viewpoint, her return to her former solitude and celibacy follows the usual pattern: even Deborah and Jael disappear after the victory over the Canaanites and are not mentioned again. Whereas Judith's lifestyle before going to the Assyrian camp can be regarded as a mourning period for her husband, an ongoing ascetic lifestyle after her return must stem from a different reason. It would seem that this is her chosen lifestyle. She seems to conduct the rest of her life as a spiritual facilitator, ready to be called upon to mediate between the human and the divine worlds.

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[76] Dancy, *Shorter Books*, 126.

Judith's story begins when the town leaders approach her during the siege and drought, requesting her help in getting rain. It ends when she resumes her duties as a religious and spiritual authority. As such, she has to remain chaste, modest and pure, and abstain from any conventional, normative family life. And so she does.

Conclusions

Judith is a female figure with a complex, multifaceted personality and contradictory features. On the one hand, she is characterized by humility, austerity, piety and devotion to God, all appropriate for the literary type of religious intermediary. On the other hand, when events and necessities dictate a change, she uses her femininity and beauty as an erotic weapon against the enemy, revealing personality traits of violence and sexuality more fitting to a *femme fatale*.

Judith's ascetic lifestyle, persistence in extended mourning, fasting, observance of holy days and dietary customs, prayer and purification are in accordance with Torah commandments, as befits a devout believer (Jdt. 10.3; 12.7). In light of Judith's androcentric, traditional, social background, her conduct as an independent woman, strong and charismatic, must be derived from a deep-seated belief in the power of Israel's God and her relationship with this God. She sees herself as a messenger; and the people, both friend and foe, seem to share this belief. The leaders of Bethulia believe she can bring rain with her prayers; Holofernes believes in her abilities to bring him victory; the chief priest, the leaders of Jerusalem and all of Israel accept her as a spiritual leader; the soldiers bring her the spoils of war — all these things imply that she is an extraordinary female figure, with high status and influence, who can and does function as a religious intermediary. Judith's words of reproof, speeches, prayers, and songs sound like the words of other prophets and prophetesses of Israel. Her actions are largely in the style of saviour, judge, mediator, warrior and, above all, God's messenger.

In the patriarchal, androcentric social structure of biblical Israel and Judah there was no place for women in the priesthood. The very idea of a woman as priest to God seems to have been incomprehensible. Women, as Brenner writes, even if they held positions of authority or leadership, were excluded from official positions in the religious and cultic spheres; and Miriam, Deborah and Huldah were no exceptions.[77]

[77] Brenner, *Israelite Woman*, 54.

The author of *Judith* chose a female figure as the heroine of his book, which is named after her. It can, therefore, be assumed that the society in which it was written was open enough to accept (some) women in an official or semi-official position. Nevertheless, this acceptance is limited. Judith herself diminishes the importance of her bravery by saying that her success is not the result of a fair fight between two equals but achieved through deception, beauty and erotic temptation: 'it was my face that tricked him to his destruction' (Jdt. 13.16). In her song, Judith mocks Holofernes for not dying as a war hero, but as being beaten by a woman whose weapon is her feminine beauty: 'For their mighty one did not fall by the hands of the young men, nor did the sons of the Titans smite him, nor did tall giants set upon him; but Judith the daughter of Merari undid him with the beauty of her countenance' (16.7). Furthermore, when she describes her experiences with Holofernes, she is apologetic and claims that she remains pure during her stay in the Assyrian camp: 'it was my face...and yet he committed no act of sin with me, to defile and shame me' (13.16). She is also careful to mention her origin as a descendant of Merari.

The text moves carefully, but boldly, between the need to glorify a woman who communicates with God and to attribute her deeds to stereotypic feminine traits: beauty and cunning. It seems as if Judith internalizes the HB's gendered, male/masculine narrative and aligns herself with the androcentric approach, according to which a woman can be successful mainly because of her looks and deceit. Judith attributes her victory to the seductive, feminine means she employs. Thus, she herself categorizes herself as a *femme fatale*.

Judith's return to her home can be interpreted from a gender perspective in light of the norms articulated in biblical literature. The message that this traditional, didactic literature conveys is that a woman may indeed have gender-reversed roles and even be related to the religious domain. However, such a woman is unsuitable for normative, conventional social life. Judith's conduct in the public sphere brings victory and saves the community, but it also threatens the boundaries of gender and social order; and, therefore, ultimately she must be removed from the public sphere and return to privacy.[78] Judith returns to her home, where she can no longer threaten the social order, and stays there until her death.

In the title of this essay I presented the question: Is there more to Judith than a pious widow and *femme fatale*? After a close reading and analysis of 'her' story, I have come to the conclusion that this interesting figure cannot be categorized as a stereotyped, single model. Hers is a complex figure, successfully melding different personae — the pious, the zealous and the cunningly seductive.

[78] Levine, 'Sacrifice and Salvation' (1992, 17-30 = 1995, 208-23).

But above all, 'she' aspires to communicate with God and does so at every appropriate occasion. The text is filled with her words to God and her attempts to communicate with Him.

Therefore, in answer to my initial question, I suggest that Judith's main characteristic is her role as a religious, even prophetic and priestly, functionary: an advisor to her people and intermediary between the human and the divine. At the murder scene she operates as a priest offering God a sacrifice, hence her mediating function is extended to the cultic sphere. Ultimately, Judith is not just a pious widow, and her appearance as *femme fatale* is but a secondary (although important) trait of her multifaceted literary figure.

Chapter 11

Judith the Slaveholder*

Jennifer A. Glancy

In the course of praising his mother, Monica, Augustine recounts a vignette concerning Monica and her mother-in-law. Tension arose between them because household slaves were spreading rumors about Monica. However, she continued to show deference to her mother-in-law, whose affection she thus regained. In order to prevent repetition of the incident the mother-in-law arranged with her son to have the slaves beaten. Chastened, the slaves caused no more problems; peace prevailed between mother- and daughter-in-law.[1]

Mention of physical punishment is casual, incidental to Augustine's paean to his mother. As in other writings originating in ancient Mediterranean cultures, the narrative world evoked by Augustine's *Confessions* accepts the institution of slavery and its attendant cruelties. This essay considers the representations of a relationship between two women, a slaveholder and a slave, in *Judith*. As Dale Martin has argued, 'Jewishness itself had little if any relevance for the structures of slavery among Jews... Slavery among Jews of the Greco-Roman period did not differ from the slave structures of those people among whom Jews were living.'[2] I thus expect that situating *Judith* in the larger context of the Greco-Roman world will prove illuminating.

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* The present study is an abridgement of my article, J.A. Glancy, 'The Mistress–Slave Dialectic: Paradoxes of Slavery in Three LXX Narratives', *JSOT* 71 (1996), 71-87. References have been updated to include some key publications on slavery in antiquity, published between the composition of the original article and its current abridgement; works cited will lead the reader to others. I have also more minimally updated the bibliography on *Judith*. A final section, 'Judith as Slaveholder', affords a welcome opportunity to reconsider my earlier analysis in light of more recent trends in scholarship.

[1] Augustine, *Confessions* (trans. Henry Chadwick; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 9.9.20.

[2] D.B. Martin, 'Slavery and the Ancient Jewish Family', in *The Jewish Family in Antiquity* (ed. S.J.D. Cohen; BJS, 289; Atlanta: Scholars Press), 113-29. Martin's view contradicts the notion that the laws of the Mishnah and Talmud could be used to reconstruct the social life of Jews in antiquity, as argued by Urbach (E.E. Urbach, 'The Laws Regarding Slavery as a Source for Social History of the Period of the Second Temple, the Mishnah, and Talmud', in *Papers of the Institute of Jewish Studies, London*, vol. 1 [ed. J.G. Weiss; Brown Classics in Judaica; Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1964=1989], 1-94). Urbach was decisively answered by Flesher (P.V.M. Flesher, *Oxen, Women, or Citizens? Slaves in the System of the Mishnah* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988], xii): 'No direct link necessarily exists between the

Feminist scholars have shown that literary sources of the ancient world tend to reflect an androcentric perspective. They also reflect the perspective of slave-owners. In the opening vignette, Augustine does not express concern with the content of the slaves' comments about Monica, whether those comments are true, or why the slaves made them. When Augustine's grandmother reverses her attitude towards Monica she does not take responsibility for their earlier hostility, but casts her slaves as scapegoats. What story might the domestic slaves have recounted about the episode?

Relationships between and among women rarely figure in ancient Mediterranean writings — except that relationships between mistresses and their attendants constitute an acceptable arena for depiction of women interacting with women.[3] At times, the sources construct civil, even intimate relations between mistresses and slaves. At other times, tension arises between them; generally, as we saw in the opening tale from Augustine, ancient authors hold slaves accountable for the tension. For the most part, contemporary scholarship has accepted these tenets: that owners could legitimately befriend persons they nonetheless considered property and that slaves were responsible for problems that arose.[4] I question both tenets.

A scarcity of primary sources creates difficulties for those who want to discuss the lives and attitudes of slaves in the ancient world. Yvon Garlan writes of Greek slavery,

> There is hardly any documentation, written or archaeological, which can be claimed to provide an authentic or original image of slavery to set alongside these portraits of slaves constructed by the literary elite of free men and accordingly quite literally 'mastered' by them.[5]

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behavior envisioned by a law and the behavior practiced by members of the community'. See C. Hezser, 'Slavery and the Jews', in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery.* Vol. 1, *The Ancient Mediterranean World* (ed. K. Bradley and P. Cartledge; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 438-55 (452-54) for a guarded assessment of Martin's assertion that Jewishness made little difference to the practice of slavery.

[3] B.M. Egger, *Women in the Greek Novel: Constructing the Feminine* (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Irvine, 1990); R. Kraemer, 'Jewish Mothers and Daughters in the Greco-Roman World', in Cohen, ed., *The Jewish Family*, 89-112.

[4] In the twenty years since I typed these words, biblical scholars and classicists have grown increasingly sensitive to the ways that slaveholding perspectives inform available primary sources. See, for example, B.J. Brooten, ed., *Beyond Slavery: Overcoming its Religious and Sexual Legacies* (Black Religion/Womanist Thought/Social Justice; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

[5] Y. Garlan, *Slavery in Ancient Greece* (trans. J. Lloyd; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 18. See also K.R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control* (Revue d'Etudes Latines, 185; Brussels: Latomus, 1984), 136, and M.I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (New York: Viking, 1980), 116.

Garlan stands among a generation of scholars who have moved, in his words, from viewing ancient slavery as 'a life-giving and spirit enhancing necessity, a precondition for the progress of the elite', to seeing it as a cruel and consistently exploitative system.[6] In the present study I follow Garlan's suggestion that scholars undertake 'symptomatic' or 'diagnostic' readings of texts that allude to slavery.[7] To return to our original example, as Augustine remembers the family in which he was raised he locates disorder and dissension not among his kin but among the slaves; to restore order is not to consider and repent for one's own maliciousness, but to locate and discipline that maliciousness in a convenient other.

The consideration of comparative material from other slave societies is a methodological gambit. In an article on Roman child nurses, Sandra Joshel offers a model for such an approach.[8] Joshel tries to bypass what Moses I. Finley characterizes as the 'sentimentality and bathos' inherent in many discussions of the relationships of owners with 'the nursemaid-governess-*paedagogus* class'.[9] Joshel argues that the modern construction of warm, intimate relationships between owners and nurses reflects the expressed sentiments of (some) owners rather than the experience of enslaved nurses. Scholars have alluded to enslaved nurses and their charges in the southern United States to illuminate the supposedly intimate connections between Roman nurses and children. Joshel disagrees:

> I draw on the testimony of masters and slaves from the American south to indicate how the nursling's view might distort the nurse and her lived reality. Although the explicit statements of mammies [*sic*] cannot prove what the Roman nurse felt, their divergence from their nurslings' views suggests the need for caution in reading nurses' epitaphs solely in terms of upper-class views and underscores the value of exploring other lines of interpretation.[10]

Following this model, I draw on an autobiographical narrative written by a former slave in the years prior to the American Civil War to help us to think about discrepancies between the perspectives of slave-owning women and the women they enslaved.

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[6] Garlan, *Slavery*, 14.

[7] Garlan, *Slavery*, 19.

[8] S.R. Joshel, 'Nurturing the Master's Child: Slavery and the Roman Child-Nurse', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 12 (1986), 3-22.

[9] Finley, *Ancient Slavery*, 105.

[10] Joshel, 'Nurturing the Master's Child', 4-5.

Bilhah's Version

Feminist scholars have worked to excavate stories and histories of women embedded in the literature preserved from ancient Mediterranean cultures. However, in attempting to make Rachel's story better known, we have neglected Bilhah's version. Why do I think that Bilhah and Rachel would tell different stories of family life with Jacob? In order to answer this question, I turn to a nineteenth-century autobiographical account, Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl.*[11] I am not suggesting that slave women living in ancient Mediterranean cultures shared the attitudes and assumptions of a formerly enslaved woman living in the United States in the nineteenth century; rather, I am suggesting that Jacobs's text inscribes reasons to anticipate divergence in the perceptions of slaves and their owners.

Jacobs's attempts to elude the predatory sexual overtures of her owner, Dr. Flint, dominate her recital of her life. However, a master's sexual interest in a slave was not a matter simply between the two of them. Jacobs writes,

> Mrs. Flint possessed the key to her husband's character before I was born. She might have used this knowledge to counsel and to screen the young and innocent among her slaves; but for them she had not sympathy. They were the objects of her constant suspicion and malevolence.[12]

Whereas the wife understands herself as wronged and the slave as guilty, the slave sees herself as hunted and the wife as indifferent.

A male slaveholder's sexual access to his slaves is a point of similarity between the slave systems of the Mediterranean and the slave systems of the Americas; another point of similarity lies in the potential for discord between the mistress and the desired slave. Tension could result either from a mistress's sexual jealousy or from her protectiveness regarding prerogatives of her offspring that she believes are threatened by the presence of the slave woman and her children.[13]

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[11] H. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[12] Jacobs, *Incidents*, 49.

[13] Throughout antiquity, circum-Mediterranean cultures were broadly tolerant of sexual relations between slaveholding men and enslaved women in their households. However, matrons were not always tolerant of their husbands' extra-marital sexual favorites. Aemilia, the widow of Scipio Africanus, manumitted the slave preferred by her husband; that she chose this course of action rather than behaving vindictively was considered to be exemplary but highly unusual (Valerius Maximus, in *Memorable Deeds and Sayings*. Vol. 2, *Books 6–9* [trans. D.R. Shackleton Bailey; LCL, 493; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000], 6.7.1). Sarah's reaction against Hagar and Ishmael after the birth of Isaac suggests that the presence of a slave woman's child by the master was an invitation to friction. Such tensions persisted through late antiquity: J.A. Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge: Early Christian Bodies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 65-68.

Are we to deny all ties of friendship between mistresses and slaves? Both in the ancient Mediterranean world and in the nineteenth-century American South, some mistresses attempted to treat their slaves decently. Harriet Jacobs explains her skepticism in the face of apparent affection:

> When I was six years old, my mother died; and then, for the first time, I learned... that I was a slave. My mother's mistress was the daughter of my grandmother's mistress. She was the foster sister of my mother; they were both nourished at my grandmother's breast. In fact, my mother had been weaned at three months old, that the babe of the mistress might obtain sufficient food. They played together as children; and when they became women, my mother was a most faithful servant to her whiter foster sister. On her death-bed her mistress promised that her children should never suffer for anything; and during her lifetime she kept her word.[14]

Thus, in her early life Jacobs knew herself as family member rather than as slave, although the cost of that family tie included the premature weaning of her own mother to provide for the nursing of the baby who was at once foster sister and owner. Ties of affection and love were present, but at times of death or financial distress the legal ties of bondage were stronger still. Despite the promises of a kindly mistress that when she died Jacobs's grandmother would be manumitted, the mistress' death instead brought the grandmother to the auction block. Harriet Jacobs's autobiographical account suggests that American slaves, at least, were aware of the contingency inherent in the amity extended by their owners.

What an owner construes as a loving relationship a slave may easily construe otherwise. Harriet Jacobs tells the story of her great-aunt Nancy who served as a night-nurse to Mrs. Flint's children, lying on the hard floor outside of Mrs. Flint's bedroom waiting to be summoned. During this time Nancy buried six of her own children. Miss Jacobs tells the story of Nancy's death:

> Mrs. Flint had rendered her poor foster-sister childless, apparently without any compunction; and with cruel selfishness had ruined her health by years of incessant, unrequited toil, and broken rest. But now she became very sentimental. I suppose she thought it would be a beautiful illustration of the attachment existing between slaveholder and slave, if the body of her old worn-out servant was buried at her feet.[15]

Mrs. Flint asked her clergyman for permission to inter Nancy in the family's plot; the clergyman had no objections except to point out that Nancy's family should be consulted in the matter of her burial:

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[14] Jacobs, *Incidents*, 14.

[15] Jacobs, *Incidents*, 221.

> It had never occurred to Mrs. Flint that slaves could have any feelings. When my grandmother was consulted, she at once said she wanted Nancy to lie with all the rest of her family, and where her own old body would be buried.[16]

Mrs. Flint acceded to the family's wishes, but expressed the difficulty she felt in knowing that she would spend eternity without Nancy near. As Jacobs notes, 'She might have added with touching pathos, "I was so long used to sleep with her lying near me, on the entry floor"'.[17]

Harriet Jacobs's version is not Bilhah's version; the slave systems of the ancient Mediterranean are not isomorphic with the slave system of the American South. Nonetheless, her story can help us be sensitive to representations of female slaves in ancient literature. First, sexual relations between masters and female slaves complicated relations between those same slaves and their mistresses, both in the ancient world and in the American South. Second, affection shared by owners and slaves did not abrogate the legal claims of slavery. Third, what a slave-owner perceived as an intimate relationship a slave might perceive as a deadening burden. While I do not assume that Harriet Jacobs and Bilhah would tell the same tales, I have learned from Harriet Jacobs some pitfalls in assuming that Rachel and Bilhah would recount a unified story about life in Jacob's household. I will keep these caveats in mind as I turn to representations of the relationship between Judith and her unnamed slave.

The Mistress–Slave Dialectic

Judith risks her life to save her people. She also risks the life of the slave woman who accompanies her. By managing the many details of the expedition, the slave makes Judith's success possible. Nonetheless, the slave's involvement is accepted as part of the course of events rather than celebrated as heroic action. When artists paint Judith, the slave typically appears. Discussions of the text of *Judith*, however, accord the maid only passing attention. The narrative takes the maid's presence and risk-taking for granted, but the reader need not.

The rhetoric of slavery encompasses more than the person of Judith's attendant. It is in fact central to the work. Judith strategically identifies herself as Holofernes's slave (e.g. Jdt. 16.5, 16), although she does not truly serve Holofernes but the God of Israel (11.17). Judith's self-description, coupled with the benign depiction of the central mistress–slave relation, obscures other references to the horrors of enslavement, particularly the fear of women being enslaved. Nebuchadnezzar has informed Holofernes that those he conquers are destined to be captives throughout the world (2.9) and, before Judith's

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[16] Jacobs, *Incidents*, 222.

[17] Jacobs, *Incidents*, 222.

intervention, the people of Israel embrace the possibility of living as slaves, valuing survival over freedom (7.27). Judith risks her own life and the life of her slave to avoid seeing her people enslaved; when she addresses the elders, she alludes to the specter of slavery as the necessary and disgraceful outcome of capitulation to the enemy. Her private prayer recalls God's past intervention on Israel's behalf, extending to Israel's victory over the house of Shechem to avenge the rape of Dinah: 'You gave up their wives to captivity and their daughters to booty' (9.4).[18] In her canticle of victory Judith rejoices that she has prevented Holofernes from fulfilling his promise to reduce Israel to captivity: 'He boasted that he would...seize my children as booty, and take my virgins as spoil' (16.4). The death of Holofernes ensures that Israel will not witness the ultimate disgrace, i.e. seeing its women sold as other men's slaves. In her canticle, Judith does not refer to the enslaved woman who was instrumental in upholding the freedom of Israel's men, children and women.

On the basis of both genealogy and heroism, Judith precedes her husband. Biblical writings typically supply genealogies (and hence identities) for male characters. *Judith* reverses the paradigm, creating a genealogy for Judith and identifying her late husband Manasseh solely in relation to Judith and her tribe. 'Women, in patriarchal Israelite society, received their identity first from their fathers and then from their husbands, but these women [Judith, Jael, Deborah] receive their identity from their actions, and in fact, give their identities to their husbands'.[19] In ancient Mediterranean writings, to identify someone's genealogy is to acknowledge his or her identity. Like most slaves, however, Judith's maid is bereft of the personal identity conferred by family connections.[20] Furthermore, unlike Judith and Jael, the slave's courageous actions do not establish a name — a reputation — for herself.

When Judith's husband dies, she inherits gold, silver, livestock, fields and male and female slaves (Jdt. 8.7). The text introduces Judith in the context of a genealogy, but introduces the slave as part of the property Judith inherits. Silence on the slave's family ties extends to silence on her nationality. Is she a Jew? To answer either negatively or affirmatively raises further questions about the assumptions the narrative makes concerning Israel's enslaved population. To answer negatively — to assume she is a Gentile — is to introduce a destabilizing element into the story, making Israel's survival contingent on the risks incurred

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[18] Citations are from the NRSV.

[19] S.A. White, 'In the Steps of Jael and Deborah: Judith as Heroine', in *'No One Spoke Ill of Her': Essays on Judith* (ed. J.C. VanderKam; SBL Early Judaism and its Literature, 1; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 5-16 (7).

[20] Bradley makes a similar point about the loss of human identity in the process of buying and selling slaves (K.R. Bradley, 'The Regular, Daily Traffic in Slaves', *The Classical Journal* 18 [1992], 125-38 [37]).

by a Gentile woman. Although other biblical stories include non-Israelites who act on Israel's behalf, *Judith* is particularly concerned with maintaining the boundaries between Jews and Gentiles, emphasizing, for example, strict observance of food laws and the Sabbath. A central prop in the story is the food bag the maid carries, containing the food she has prepared and eventually containing the head of the enemy. Does Judith rely in this precarious circumstance on the ministrations of a Gentile woman?

The taking of women to serve as slaves in foreign nations is a fear that underscores the importance of Judith's mission in maintaining the integrity of the people of Israel. Since we learn nothing about the national identity of Judith's maid or how she came to be enslaved, we might conjecture that she had been part of the spoils of another war, sold into slavery in Israel. However, would Judith assume that a Gentile woman would be loyal in the enemy's camp, where she might curry enough favor to win freedom by betraying Judith's purposes to the Assyrians?

Judith relies on this woman to prepare her food in the midst of the enemy and she assumes that this woman will not betray her by exposing her purposes; perhaps, then, the slave is a Jew, committed like Judith to the preservation of her people.[21] Indeed, the narrative constructs a martial world in which Jewish slaves play a pivotal role; Judith's canticle celebrates the role that 'sons of female slaves' play in the battle against the Assyrians (16.12). On this reading two Jewish women effect Israel's victory and Judith is not alone of her people in resisting Holofernes's aggression.[22]

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[21] R.G. Branch and P.J. Jordaan, 'The Significance of Secondary Characters in Susanna, Judith, and the Additions to Esther in the Septuagint', *Acta Patristica et Byzantina* 20 (2009), 389-416 (406): 'Both [Judith and her attendant] pray (Jdt. 13.10) and observe dietary laws; Bagoas, the eunuch in charge of Holofernes's household, calls them both Hebrew slaves (Jdt. 14.18)'. I offer a different assessment of these textual details, which I had earlier overlooked (Glancy, 'The Mistress–Slave'). Narrating the women's escape from camp with the severed head, the text mentions that the women had established the practice of leaving to pray, presumably to create a precedent for their departure; the text does not otherwise suggest that the enslaved woman shares Judith's habit of prayer. Bagoas refers to the two women as slaves (using the masculine form, οἱ δοῦλοι), but then says that 'one woman of the Hebrews' (μία γυνὴ τῶν Εβραίων), a phrase that seems more readily understood as 'one Hebrew woman' than as 'one woman of the two Hebrews', as Branch and Jordaan ('Secondary Characters', 406) seem to infer. Even if the phrase should be understood as 'one woman of the two Hebrews', the reader has no particular reason to trust Bagoas's estimation of the enslaved woman's ethnicity.

[22] *Pace* Pervo (R.I. Pervo, 'Aseneth and her Sisters: Women in Jewish Narrative and in the Greek Novel', in *'Women Like This': New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World* [ed. A.-J. Levine; Atlanta: SBL, 1992], 145-60).

To assume the slave is a Jew, however, is to intensify questions about rewards for the heroic service she renders not only to her mistress but also to the Israelite people. After the Israelites slay the fleeing Assyrians and plunder Holofernes's camp, all the women of Israel gather to celebrate Judith in dance (15.12). Is Judith's slave among those who so honor the heroic Judith? Does the woman whose life was equally at risk receive any acclaim? The narrative world of *Judith* does not concern itself with such questions. In this world, the fitting reward for a faithful slave is manumission. When Judith reaches the age of one hundred and five, she frees her slave and dies.

The text does not highlight the slave's extraordinary service on behalf of Israel's freedom as a reason for granting the slave her own freedom. Manumission was not the universal experience of slaves in the Greco-Roman world, but neither was it a rare event. Furthermore, the manumission of an aged slave was not necessarily a kindness to the slave, who could be left with minimal resources for survival. Nonetheless, mention of Judith's belated manumission of her slave appears as casual confirmation of the righteousness of her life and its closure. Perhaps, as Amy-Jill Levine argues, 'the patriarchal culture can deal with only one woman who speaks and acts; another such exceptional individual would too severely compromise the status quo. Thus, until Judith's death, her "favorite slave" must remain silent and in service'.[23] While the logic of patriarchy may require the continued subjugation of Judith's maid, patriarchy is not the only beneficiary. Judith, too, has surely benefitted from her slave's lifetime of compulsory service.

If we assume the slave is Jewish, her deferred liberation is even more troubling. The text claims a commitment to upholding the Law; Judith insists to Holofernes that Israel will be defeated when they cease to observe the food laws and eat what is forbidden (11.12-13). But the Torah states that Israelites who own Hebrew slaves must release them in the seventh year (Deut. 15.12) and Jeremiah condemns the Israelites for neglecting this aspect of the Law (Jer. 34.12-22).[24] If her slave is a Jew, Judith's lifelong use of her slave is a violation of God's commandments, minimally suggesting that observance of food laws has priority over the just treatment of fellow Jews.

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[23] A.-J. Levine, 'Sacrifice and Salvation: Otherness and Domestication in the Book of Judith', in VanderKam, ed., *'No One Spoke Ill of Her'*, 17-30 (25). Repr. in A. Brenner, ed., *A Feminist Companion to Esther, Judith and Susanna* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 208-23.

[24] Flesher (*Oxen, Women, or Citizens?*) argues convincingly against assuming that Jews obeyed biblical laws regarding slavery during the period of the Second Temple. Hezser concludes that 'the manumission laws of the Torah were not commonly practiced' (C. Hezser, *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2005], 308). However, I am less concerned with the actual practice of Jews than with the world that the narrative creates for the reader.

Paradoxes pervade the representation of slavery in *Judith*. In this narrative world, Israel's freedom hinges on the work of a slave. If that slave is a Gentile, then the maintenance of Israel's identity in a precarious situation rests on Gentile courage; if that slave is a Jew, a story that epitomizes the importance of observance of the Law condones neglect of the commandments regarding manumission of Israelite slaves. The slave's duties vary; she has charge over all of Judith's estate (Jdt. 8.10); she is a body slave present as Judith adorns herself (10.2-4); she carries the heavy bags as they hike to the enemy encampment (10.5); as she accompanies Judith away from that camp she bears Holofernes's bloody head (13.9-10).[25] Whether she feels pride in her own accomplishments; whether she feels loyalty to the woman who continues to enslave her until old age; whether she has children or maintains other family relations — these are not questions the text invites us to ask. The slave is as silent a handmaiden to the narrative as she is to Judith.

The success of Judith's mission seems contingent on the participation of her slave, but the narrative never considers the cost of that participation to the slave, even as it hints at the horrors of the slavery with which Israel flirts. To learn to read with the eyes of a slave from the ancient Mediterranean world is beyond the capability of this reader. However, with this essay I encourage readers to distance themselves from the perspective of the ancient slave-owners whose interests and assumptions govern the construction of mistress–slave relationships in a number of biblical writings.

Judith as Slaveholder

When I began to research and write about ancient slavery in the mid-1990s, I had little idea that the project would stretch over two decades (and counting). 'The Mistress–Slave Dialectic: Paradoxes of Slavery in Three LXX Narratives' represents the first fruits of those investigations. In abridging the article for republication, I decided to eliminate sections on Daniel 13 (the story of Susanna) and *Tobit*, focusing on the relationship between Judith and the enslaved woman on whom she relies, a relationship central to a narrative in which fear of enslavement is in turn a central theme.

In revisiting this material, I am struck by the degree to which the vocabulary and thematics of slavery permeate the narrative. Judith does not risk her life because she fears her people will be slaughtered; she risks her life because she fears her people will be held captive and enslaved. The unnamed slave serves as doppelgänger for Judith, with her self-identification as δούλη (e.g. 11.5, 16, 17; 12.4, 6) and παιδίσκη (11.5, 6). In fact, the word δούλη is used more often for

[25] Hopkins fleshes out the phrase 'body slaves': K. Hopkins, 'Novel Evidence for Roman Slavery', *Past and Present* 138 (1993), 3-27 (22).

Judith than for the slave. The text's preferred term for the unnamed woman is ἄβρα, often translated, not incorrectly, as maid (8.10, 33; 10.2, 5; 13.9; 16.23). Only in the tense scenes around Holofernes's tent — where the enslaved woman spreads lambskins for Judith (12.15), where Judith consumes only what the enslaved woman has prepared (12.19), and where the enslaved woman stands guard (13.3) — does the text refer to her as δούλη. When Judith hands the head of Holofernes to her servant, the text again refers to the latter as ἄβρα. Indeed, the Vulgate adopts ἄβρα as a loan word, treated in the Middle Ages as a proper name, Abra.[26]

Although the Septuagint relies on varied terminology for the woman — ἄβρα, δούλη, and παιδίσκη (10.10) — contemporary scholars tend to refer to her simply as Judith's maid, a choice belying the coercive exploitation inherent in the relationship between the two women. However, there is no doubt that the ἄβρα is enslaved. She must be among the 'men and woman slaves (παῖδας καὶ παιδίσκας), livestock, and fields' (8.7) that Judith inherits from her late husband — unless, of course, the chattel that the well-born Judith brought to her marriage included her favorite slave, her ἄβρα. The text introduces her as the person in charge of all Judith's possessions (8.10). The role of slave as agent is common in Greco-Roman cultures; if there is anything surprising, it is not that Judith has assigned a slave charge of her property, but that she has assigned that charge to another female.[27] Careful to protect her own honor, Judith does not cross town to visit Uzziah. Rather, she sends a woman with no claim on the protections afforded privileged women, a woman thus able to negotiate public spaces.[28] And of course, nothing underscores her status as unfree so much as the text's observation that at the time of Judith's death, her by-then elderly ἄβρα was freed, a status previously denied her (16.23).

I have argued that the narrative of *Judith* — a narrative shaped by fear of enslavement — is governed by a slaveholding perspective. I would argue, moreover, that contemporary scholars have not yet freed themselves from that perspective. For example, Branch and Jordaan, who offer one of the more extended analyses of the character of Judith's maid, never refer to her as a slave (or as an enslaved woman). Their conclusion that 'she willingly risks her life for Judith and her fellow Israelites' does not take into account the dynamics of coercion and exploitation implicit in any system of slavery — dynamics

[26] E. Ciletti and H. Lähnemann, 'Judith in the Christian Tradition', in *The Sword of Judith: Judith Studies across Disciplines* (ed. K.R. Brine, E. Ciletti, and H. Lähnemann; Cambridge: Open Book, 2010), 41-65 (52).

[27] Note, for example, the ubiquity of slaves as agents in the parables of Jesus: J.A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 113-15.

[28] Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge*, 41.

nonetheless evident in the narrative itself, haunted by the specter of possible enslavement. Is the reader to understand that Judith's enslaved companion willingly risks her life? To me, it seems more accurate to venture that in the textual world created by the narrative, the question does not arise.

In the pursuit of freedom, Judith relies on an unfree woman, a reliance putting that woman at risk. Her slave would not have been spared if Judith had been captured: as Judith prays, 'By the deceit of my lips strike down the slave with the prince and the prince with his servant' (9.10). The text betrays no interest in the motivation of the enslaved woman. In the textual world created by Judith, the enslavement of her people is presented as a threat. The enslavement of others is taken for granted. I have no good story to tell about why readers continue to accept without question the slaveholding ethos of the narrative, except perhaps (and I am certainly not the first to advance this observation) a tendency for interpreters — especially female interpreters — to identify with the character of Judith. Perhaps nowhere is that identification so graphically illustrated as in the painting of Judith with the head of Holofernes by the Renaissance artist Fede Galizia, a painting in which the artist signs her name on the blade of Judith's sword.[29] Standing behind Judith, with finger quizzically lifted to mouth, is the unnamed slave.

[29] As we viewed the painting together at the Ringling Museum in Sarasota, Florida, Susan Behuniak pointed out Galizia's signature, emblazoned on Judith's sword. I thank her for this observation. For a viewing of the painting (zooming on the sword can make the signature visible) on the Web and some information on Galizia, see http://ringlingdocents.org/judith2.htm.

Chapter 12

Clothing Seduces: Did You Think It Was Naked Flesh that Did It?*

Athalya Brenner-Idan

Introduction

Is it the naked body that seduces?

In cultural studies, the unclothed human body by and large signifies a raw, 'uncooked', natural state, whereas the clothed body is the restrained, 'cooked' cultured state.[1] In this essay I shall trace descriptions of clothes and change of clothing in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (HB/OT) and in deuterocanonical literature as they appear within canonized texts containing sexual innuendos, especially such texts that concern female literary figures. It will be shown that clothed or covered bodies are more often than not presented as more alluring than naked bodies, and that clothing, or the change thereof, serves as fetish, substitute and euphemism for sexual desire, a locus of liminality that belies tidy categories. From the Garden East of Eden to Judith and Madam Potiphar in the *Testament of Joseph* and beyond, clothing and body-cover stand in the place of the naked sexual object or subject of desire. This concealment somehow may denote sexual temptation or the anticipation of the never-described, or never-viewed, or never-occurring, sexual act. Possible reasons for this way of description will be advanced, against the backdrop of some socio-anthropological reflections.

Disclaimers

Disclaimers are useful, so let me begin with several. First, the proverbial wheel cannot and perhaps should not be invented every time an essay is written. It is instructive perhaps just to hold the old metaphorical wheel utilized for a

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* This essay is developed from a keynote paper delivered at an international conference, 'Body, Psyche and Space in Old Testament Apocryphal Literature', held at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa, 13–17 July 2013.

[1] I have here borrowed the terminology coined by Claude Lévi-Strauss in *The Raw and the Cooked: Mythologiques, Volume 1* (trans. John and Doreen Weightman; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969, 1983). Originally *Le Cru et le Cuit* (Paris: Plon, 1964).

moment to the light and to look at it from a hitherto less occupied angle. Second, in the following discussion I owe a great debt to the work on clothing, and its meaning and signification in the bible, undertaken by my friend and colleague Heather McKay (for instance).[2] Third, I shall allude to theoretical considerations here only briefly and sketchily: my main business shall be revisiting biblical texts for their garment significations. More specifically, I would like to reflect on how clothing, not nudity, signifies temptation in the HB and beyond it, in the deuterocanonical books, and that in contradistinction to chronologically later — especially visual — depictions of such seduction-content scenes. Finally, some short reflections about clothing as applied to the deity will be advanced.

Clothing and their Practical and Social Function: A Superficial Review

There is no doubt that clothing and adornment are one of the cultural phenomena that separate humans from animals, even higher primates. There is, though, lack of agreement about the original start-time and function of clothing, or the covering of the nude human body. There are two camps of thought: the one holds that clothing originated in the need to shelter the naked body, thus covering it first and foremost against the physical factors of climate and damage; and the second postulates that body coverage and adornment originated in the wish to decorate the body, thus enhancing its beauty. Qua chronological span, in the past biologists concluded from finding traces of lice on human bodies that clothing goes back to between 3 million and 100,000 years ago — when, sometime in that period, the newly evolved body lice developed as a result of contact with body hair and the pelt or fur used to cover it in colder climates. However, in recent years, and according to newer research, it seems that this vast timespan for the origin of clothing can be limited somewhat. Currently it is believed, again judging by the mutual relationship between body lice and early humans, that clothing developed in Africa 170,000 years ago, well after the early hominids had shed their body hair, and before clothing allowed those hominids

[2] McKay's interest in clothing and adornment has been one of my teachers for writing this essay, and I am grateful to her for her guidance, including the introduction of some bibliographical materials that I have not come across beforehand. See Heather A. McKay, 'The Gendering of Display in the Hebrew Bible', in *On Reading Prophetic Texts: Gender-Specific and Related Studies in Memory of Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes* (ed. B. Becking and M. Dijkstra; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 169-99; 'Gendering the Body: Clothes Maketh the (Wo)Man', in *Theology and the Body* (ed. Robert Hannaford and Jan Jobling; Leominster: Gracewing, Fowler, Wright, 1999), 84-104; and 'Lying and Deceit in Families: The Duping of Isaac and Tamar', in *The Family in Life and Death: The Family in Ancient Israel: Sociological and Archaeological Perspectives* (ed. Patricia Dutcher-Walls; New York: T&T Clark International, 2009), 28-41.

to migrate from hotter climates to colder climates and higher grounds.[3] Since humanity probably originated in hotter climates, such as in Africa[4] and Southern Asia, the assumption about original practices of clothing for adornment or other less climate-related uses makes more sense for those regions, as can be seen even today. At any rate, the need to cover the body because of sexual shame seems to have come later and is culturally secondary. As we learn from Genesis 3, Eve and Adam cover their sexual organs for shame immediately after eating from the tree. But even that act is pre-sex, since they discover sex only after leaving the garden in the next Genesis chapter. The shaming associated with their naked state seems to be more of a general social kind: adults should be clothed; this is social propriety that distinguishes adults from children and supplies the human body with defense in relation to the other's gaze or malevolent physical intention. In short: sexual modesty as motivation for clothing is a secondary phenomenon, and its prevalence in religious systems today should not blind us to the actual origins of clothing. Nudity, however, is socially regarded as complex for other reasons:

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[3] Melissa A. Toups *et al.*, 'Origin of Clothing Lice Indicates Early Clothing Use by Anatomically Modern Humans in Africa', *Molecular Biology and Evolution* 28.1 (2011), 29-32. Online at http://mbe.oxfordjournals.org/content/28/1/29.full.pdf+html. Abstract: 'Clothing use is an important modern behavior that contributed to the successful expansion of humans into higher latitudes and cold climates. Previous research suggests that clothing use originated anywhere between 40,000 and 3 Ma, though there is little direct archaeological, fossil, or genetic evidence to support more specific estimates. Since clothing lice evolved from head louse ancestors once humans adopted clothing, dating the emergence of clothing lice may provide more specific estimates of the origin of clothing use. Here, we use a Bayesian coalescent modeling approach to estimate that clothing lice diverged from head louse ancestors at least by 83,000 and possibly as early as 170,000 years ago. Our analysis suggests that the use of clothing likely originated with anatomically modern humans in Africa and reinforces a broad trend of modern human developments in Africa during the Middle to Late Pleistocene' (29).

[4] So Emily Willingham, 'Of Lice and Men: An Itchy History', in her *Scientific American* Blog on 14 February 2011 (http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/guest-blog/2011/02/14/of-lice-and-men-an-itchy-history/): 'While the evolutionary history of lice helps us trace our deep past, we can also use them to explain more recent developments, such as the advent of attire. Body lice hang out — literally — in clothing, and pinpointing when this *Pediculus* subspecies separated from its head-bound brethren may have helped pinpoint when *Homo sapiens* decided to put on some clothes. Fig leaves aside, the question has been wide open, with ranges from 40,000 years ago to 3 million. But recent work indicates a divergence between the *Pediculus* subspecies at 170,000 years ago. This timing puts clothing far earlier than many estimates and well before humans would have needed them for warmth. It's also well after humans lost their body hair, so for awhile there, our ancestors were wandering around naked and smooth…'

> Nudity is a negative state, a privation, loss, dispossession. The adjectives denuded, stripped and divested describe a person who is deprived of something he or she ought to have. Within the sphere of this concept — which extended broadly through the Near Eastern populations (Egyptians, Babylonian and Hebrew) — being unclothed meant finding oneself in a degraded and shamed position, typical of prisoners, slaves or prostitutes, of those who are demented, cursed or profaned.[5]

One may therefore add that to be clothed is to have an identity, power, status and social definition that is further defined by the *sort* of garments one wears.[6]

Various ancient cultures view the *extent* of coverage, especially for females, as a sociocultural necessity, yet they do so in varied form and to different degrees, although coverage has become associated with sexual modesty. Interestingly, all such societies display more relaxed clothing codes for males, and a penchant for body adornment by jewelry, hair and so on for both genders.[7] Even Hellenic culture, which celebrated the body beautiful and athletic in visual and plastic representations, is less sexual than it is aesthetic. And, as is well known, it centers first and foremost on the naked male body and largely spares the female body, leaving it covered below the breasts apart from in specialized depictions of prostitution and sexual license scenes. The Romans were even more reluctant to bare their citizens of both genders, although they loved — much like brilliant previous conquerors — to depict their defeated enemies as wholly or partly naked. We shall return later to the question of how this upside-down attitude of revealing female rather than male bodies became popular in post-medieval art, thus changing by the repeated representations — for the readers — also the biblical passages to which we shall turn in a moment.

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[5] Mario Perniola,'Between Clothing and Nudity', in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body: Part One* (ed. Michel Feher, Ramona Naddaff and Nadia Tazi; New York: Zone, 1989), 237-65 (237); also quoted in McKay, 'Gendering the Body'.

[6] For the impact of clothing and adornment in social behaviour, establishing social power structures and sorting social stratification, see J.M. Cordwell and R.A. Schwarz, eds., *The Fabrics of Culture: The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment* (World Anthropology; The Hague: Mouton, 1979). My personal favourite is the article by Ernst Harms, 'The Psychology of Clothes', *American Journal of Sociology* 44.2 (1938), 239-50 (also at http://www.jstor.org/stable/2768730). In spite of the seemingly outdated terminology in places, and with an emphasis on the interpersonal effects of clothing and dressing, this article seems to me a superb, non-jargon essay that is certainly applicable to reading clothing in the HB as well. The negative attitude to nudity in the HB is expressed, inter alia, by the technical term used for signifying incest, which is 'to uncover X's nakedness' (the verb גלה Qal + ערוה).

[7] See further on gendering by clothing in the HB, against the background of both ancient cultures and later low-technology cultures, in McKay, 'Gendering the Body'.

In the Hebrew Bible: Some Textual Data

Clothing is certainly an external marker of social status. Thus, it is subject to rules, customs and regulations. Clothing marks class and occupation: laity from priests, for instance (white clothing for the latter), or royals/nobles from commoners (long tunic, purple), or military personnel when a uniform and insignia are worn (and equipment carried). Clothing can also mark a personal in-gender status, again especially for women. Good examples would be sackcloth for mourning (both genders), women's bridal costumes, the veil for certain classes of females (Assyrian law), head coverings, and widow's weeds.[8]

Clothing as Status Marker for Male Figures

The chief semantic term for 'garment' in Hebrew is בגד (pl. בגדים) for both genders. Males may also have an אזור, an undergarment that covers their genitals; there is no information about a parallel female garment. In general there seems to be a difference between the basic outer garment of males and females in the HB, although both are called שמלה (or with a metathesis שלמה, pl. שמלות — 35 occurrences in the HB, and see especially Deut. 22.5). כתנת and מעיל are usual for outer garments of both genders. A כתנת, for instance, serves to mark Joseph as a favoured son, undoubtedly a position with many benefits; when he is stripped of it, his status and circumstances change drastically. Similarly, Tamar daughter of David wears such a כתנת that, in her case, signifies her status as a royal virgin daughter. When she is raped and stops being a virgin, she herself signifies her change of social status by tearing her garment publicly.

So much for private or domestic events. How about the public signification of changing clothes? When the social status of Joseph (Gen. 41), Mordecai (Est. 6) and Daniel (Dan. 5) is elevated in the foreign king's court, the situation is externally marked, inter alia, by two ceremonial acts: their clothes are changed and they are given certain exclusive pieces of jewelry that mark their newly given near-royal stature and power. In other words, the adornment change has a clear political implication. In fact, it is the visual manner in which their new political function is indicated. So, when David is offered Saul's uniform, not only his weaponry (1 Sam. 17.38), even though David eventually refuses both, this means that he has become a military in Saul's service. When Elisha picks up Elijah's mantle, he hopes to become Elijah (2 Kgs 2.13). And other examples, if less clear than that, are surely available.

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[8] Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002).

And for Public Female Figures?

Social dress codes for women are different to men's in modern and contemporary culture, as brilliantly shown already a century ago by Charlotte Gilman.[9] To continue her work in a different direction, and to connect it with Perniola's cited, non-gendered remarks on nudity, let us note the following. In contemporary culture we expect seductive women, not to mention prostitutes, to display at least a certain amount of inviting naked flesh in order to enhance their sexual appeal. It may come as an amusing shock that in biblical literature the exact opposite obtains: when a female figure is presented as contemplating sexual seduction, or as planning it, she dresses up — or buttons up, if you will.

Let us look at some obvious HB examples.

Tamar daughter-in-law of Judah takes off her widow's weeds, covers her face in a veil, covers her whole body (ותתעלף, Gen. 38.14), then sits and waits for Judah. Judah thinks she is a prostitute but is of course wrong. Why does he think so? Most commentators would deduce from v. 15 that he thought so because 'she covered her face'. This interpretation is difficult. There does not seem to be a strong ancient Near Eastern tradition of prostitutes covering their faces, as seen from the Assyrian laws.[10] It seems more logical that Tamar's face is covered so that Judah does not recognize her and thus can jump to conclusions about her vocation from her sitting alone at the crossroads — as he indeed does.[11] So, even apart from her face cover, fully necessary in her case, she is fully dressed, having changed her visual status from widow to just an unidentified woman.

The good-looking prisoner, taken in war by an Israelite who wishes to marry her, has to distance herself first from her country of origin and then from her dead family. She, too, like Tamar, is grieving for the dead. She mourns, but also has to undergo a series of ceremonial changes. She shaves her head, cuts her nails, and then changes her שִׂמלה ('garment') at the end of the given period.

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[9] Charlotte Perkins-Gilman, *The Dress of Women: A Critical Introduction to the Symbolism and Sociology of Clothing* (ed. M. R. Hill and M.J. Deegan; Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2002 [originally 1915]).

[10] *MAL* 40 states categorically that only married women, and the secondary wives of the same husband, can/should cover their faces while in public. Hierodules can cover their faces if married. The same seems to be supported by Rebekah's action when she sees Isaac, her intended husband, for the first time: she covers herself with a shawl (Gen. 24.65; the term used, ותתכס, is different from the one used in the Tamar story, but with a similar meaning). The woman of Prov. 7, who is described as a married woman and by the obscure expression זונה שית (v. 10b), is at most dressed like a prostitute, whatever that may consist of (so KJV, NRSV, NIV, JPS 1985 and more translations), but that does not imply a face cover. Furthermore, it goes without saying that a face (and even body) cover is considered the hallmark of female decency in Mediterranean and other, especially Islamic, cultures, even nowadays.

[11] For more on lying, deception and clothing in Genesis, see McKay, 'Lying and Deceit'.

Only then is she properly processed, so to speak, for becoming an Israelite's wife (Deut. 21.10-14). While the mourning is understandable in itself, the other actions, including the removal of the interim clothing, constitute a visual movement towards a change of status.

When Jezebel hears about Jehu's successful coup she makes up her eyes and arranges her hair prior to her calling to him from the palace window (2 Kgs 9.30). It is not stated that she has changed her clothes. However, her behaviour shows that she tries to cling to her royal status, unsuccessfully in her case. Jezebel, too, is a widow and also a bereaved mother. Her personal adornment, with or without change of clothes, signifies her wish to introduce a change or at least confront a political power change.

What does Ruth do when she follows Naomi's advice and goes to the threshing floor in order to compromise Boaz (Ruth 3)? Ruth, a widow as well, washes, changes her clothes, and puts on perfume. Only then is she ready to surprise Boaz in his sleep and ask him to marry her. Be the scene on the threshing floor a seduction scene or otherwise — we have no way of knowing what exactly happened there — one thing is clear: Ruth has to leave behind her old garments in order to be able to enter her new society and the new status awaiting her — a member of the in-family, wife of Boaz, and mother of a son.

Esther is an orphan, looked after by her cousin Mordecai. After Haman manages to convince the king that all the Jews in the empire should be killed, Mordecai wears mourning clothes and Esther fasts — hence the ritual is shared between them (ch. 4). But then, when Esther comes to the king unbidden, the Hebrew has ותלבש אסתר מלכות (5.1): 'Esther put on royal apparel' (JPS 1985, KJV); she 'put on her royal robes' (NRSV, NIV) or 'royal clothing' (WEB). Now, the Hebrew word מלכות, translated here as 'royal', is actually a noun ('royalty') that appears in this text three more times: the king is sitting on his 'royal' throne in his 'royal' house (4.1 again) and offers Esther half his 'royal [kingdom]' (v. 3). And yet, most commentators will have it that Esther was so attractive in her splendid attire that she 'found favour in the king's eyes'. Not so simple, it would appear. It would seem to me, not least because of the repetition of מלכות here — and the fact that Esther is named 'queen' — that what Ahashuerus recognizes is that Esther has come on a political mission, signified by her being properly attired with all the decorum that should be observed — hence she deserves a proper political audience. That she turns the occasion into something ostensibly less official is another matter entirely, and the king goes along with it. Once again, the clothing is the message, full regal clothing this time as befits a regal mission; and Esther changes her clothes as part of the change in her state, extending her role from wife to politician ('queen').

Which leads us to Judith. Judith is a widow who wears an extreme style of mourning for her husband, for an extended period, and also fasts regularly, only stopping her habitual fast on the Sabbath (Jdt. 8.4-6). Having decided to do something about the impeding trouble (8.30-32), Esther-style, she fasts and prays (ch. 9; cf. Est. 4.16); and then she removes her widow's weeds, Tamar-style. She changes into her best clothes, including head-dress (Tamar! Hint of deception here?) and shoes and jewelry and perfume (10.1-4). With that she assumes an older, outgoing personality that she must have owned before her husband's death. The changed clothes, her old clothes, are a clear visual manifestation of that change. She is a lady on a political saving mission: soon it appears even to the enemy that she is not just a beauty but also a wise woman, with rhetorical abilities, Abigail-style (1 Sam. 25). Henceforth she never undresses in public, nor removes her changed clothes. Does she try to seduce Holofernes by her clothing, which enhances her beauty? Perhaps. However, this does not cancel out the fact that for us, the readers, Judith's change of clothes signifies her entry into another state of being — in her case (and Esther's) from the domestic into the public. And sure enough: once her mission is accomplished, her clothes go back into storage, so to speak.

Judith undresses only for sleep. When she dresses up again, it is in order to shock Holofernes with her beauty prior to beheading him. Let us note: the change of function does not exclude usage of beauty. Judith's beauty is indeed in her garments and jewels and cosmetic preparation, as she states in her victory song (ch. 16). But it is not in the contours of her body, apart from her face. It is in her appearance in her changed clothing.[12] Thereafter, when the victory procession is over, she returns to her reclusive widow's existence. Whether she returns to her widow's garments as a visual sign of her transformation back from local/national hero to a widowed woman remains, unfortunately, unmentioned. But we can advance an educated guess: Judith would change her clothes again to the equivalent of a housecoat, at the very least — no political, attractive garments in the house.

From the Hebrew Bible to *Judith* and Back

The *Judith* novella, especially its second part (ch. 8 onwards), contains many borrowed themes from HB texts: from presenting Judith with a national, multi-tribal genealogy with national leadership traits, to attaching to her fatal attraction along the lines exhibited in the stories of the saviour heroines listed, to her depiction as the nation/city incarnate, much like Jerusalem in Lamentations.

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[12] For more on Judith and her clothing as significant for the seduction of Holofernes, see Jan Willen van Henten's essay in this volume, 226-41.

It is now time, perhaps, to focus on some traits that are relevant to her buttoned-up seductive appearance, as comparable to other HB saviour heroines.

It would seem — and much to my own surprise when I was working on this essay — that Judith's depiction as a bereaved woman-turned-heroine is in concert with other unexpected female saviours. These woman figures are bereaved, widows or orphans (Esther), and may be in actual mourning at the time of events. The mourning state is mostly externally recognized, among other things, by appropriate garments. Such woman figures must signify their departure from a secluded, private state and [re]entry into the public arena by changing their garments. This marker is different yet similar to the clothing change Joseph, Mordecai and Daniel undergo in the foreign king's court — similar, since it indicates a change of social status; but also different, since in the case of Judith, as well as Esther and Tamar, it introduces not straightforward elevation in sociopolitical status but the readiness to resume their femininity and sexuality, usually for a public cause.[13] Perhaps the need of those stories' authors to present such potentially seductive female figures as newly arising from bereavement in order to save lives or create new life is really worth pondering. Or perhaps this is self-understood?

Nakedness in the HB often denotes social shame, not only and not simply sexual shame. To be naked in public is to be vulnerable and animalistic, not just sexually available: the cultural dialogic of nakedness/cover is thus not limited to the sexual realm. As briefly mentioned above (see n. 6), ערוה, literally 'nakedness', is a euphemism for female and male genitalia, such as in the incest taboos of Leviticus 18 and 20 and in Noah's drunken state (Gen. 9). The public shaming of a nation that is depicted as a virgin daughter, like Babylon (Isa. 47.1-3), or of Jerusalem, or of Samaria, in prophetic writings such as Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, has the metaphorical 'woman' stripped in public as punishment. When Hanun king of Ammon does not believe King David's intentions, he seizes the latter's envoys, shaves half their beards and cuts their garments to their buttocks (2 Sam. 10.4). This double humiliation — cut garments together with half-shaven beards — is immediately understood by David for what it signifies: loss of honour. Therefore, apart from in cases of intended shaming, especially the public shaming of women, the HB covers nudity at all costs. Even in the Song of Songs, where physical love and desire are the order of the day, both female and male bodies are tightly hidden in metaphors, tropes and images of smell and sound that are far removed from the physical standalone human and

[13] Inversely, the 'wise woman' from Tekoa whom Joab sends to King David to convince him to bring back Absalom from exile is instructed to put on mourning clothes, rather than take them off, as befits her mission (2 Sam. 14.2). The element of deception, as tied to clothing, is of course present here too.

gendered body, or its parts. Yes, body parts are itemized, but they are so heavily veiled by figures of speech as to become invisible. We, as readers, are simply not allowed to gaze at an unveiled human body. It is there, certainly, to be touched and praised, but not to be seen. Or do you think that King David was captivated by Bathsheba's naked body? Not necessarily.[14] That is an assumption; in all probability, she bathed in her under-tunic, the way people did until modernity (although that would spoil the fun for some commentators).[15] And the same is probably true for the bathing Susanna, who unintentionally raised the corrupt elders' passion: so in the text if not in its later visual representations (Sus. 15-18). Although attitudes to nakedness were more relaxed in Hellenistic culture, still, this relaxation involved the male's, or male athlete's body, much more than the female body. The female body remained protected and clothed; and so it remains in most Mediterranean cultures until this very day. Unless, of course, female nudity is made shameful and defenseless by being stripped in public.

How to Appear a Temptress?

So, in a culture so dedicated to hiding the human body, particularly the female body, from the reader's gaze, how can a woman figure be convincingly described as a temptress? Here are some ways, as noticeably collected and utilized by the author(s) of *Judith*, after examples of the HB and beyond.

One. The woman figure is initially defined as mourning or bereaved: lacking a husband or parents, thus in a liminal social state considering the patriarchal framework.

Two. The woman figure embraces a cause that is either for the collective good, or a choice is imposed upon her (the 'beautiful prisoner of war'). In any case, she does not act out of personal interest (narrowly defined).

Three. The woman figure has to be beautiful (which is not specified in the case of Tamar daughter-in-law of Judah, but the Jewish sages hasten to fill in the gap here). What her beauty consists of we do not know. There is hardly any specification beyond the generalization.[16]

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[14] Sarah M. Koenig, *Isn't This Bathsheba? A Study in Characterization* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 40.

[15] For generated images for a naked Bathsheba in cinema, see David M. Gunn, 'Bathsheba Goes Bathing in Hollywood: Words, Images, and Social Locations', *Semeia* 74 (1996), 75-101.

[16] The lack of specification is more glaring in the case of woman figures than of man figures (cf. David's description in 1 Sam. 16.12, 'he was ruddy, with beautiful eyes, and handsome' [my translation after the NRSV]). Otherwise, and even in the Song of Songs and beyond the mention of Lea's 'soft' eyes (Gen. 29.17a, if a compliment it is), no HB female figure gets a physical description of her general beauty. Even the *Genesis Apocryphon*, while lovingly dwelling on Sarah's beauty, simply repeats that her body parts were 'so beautiful'. And in the *T. Jos.* 9, when

Four. The woman changes her clothes. This causes, or signifies, her transformation from a private [grieving] woman into a would-be saviour and/or social insider. In other words, the garment change is a marker of new energy, status, and the ability to develop new power. In other words, the new garments empower and encourage, in addition to indicating that the woman figure 'belongs' — much like a soldier's uniform or a priest's robes.

Five. The woman figure's lack of body description is compensated for by the splendor of her apparel and jewelry, which can be quite detailed — especially by comparison to her detail-less bodily beauty (and see for instance the list of female finery in the accusation against flirtatious Jerusalem maidens, Isa. 3.16-24). Again, the detailing points to the significance of the new clothing, which should be understood as a functional uniform.

Six. The woman figure may compensate for the lack of body visibility by rhetorical ability. So, Judith speechifies and prays at length; so does Esther, in the Greek versions; so does the זרה woman in Proverbs, whose body or parts thereof, once again, are probably covered (Prov. 7.10-20).[17] So does Madam Potiphar (Gen. 39), who in post-biblical sources from the *Testament of Joseph* onwards in Midrash has both clothes and speeches in abundance. In brackets, let us also add that the close textual proximity of food/drink and clothed sexual temptation can also be further investigated — as in Song of Songs, the two Tamar narratives (Gen. 38 and 2 Sam. 14), *Esther*, *Ruth*, and *Judith* (and Madam Potiphar in and outside the HB).

Seven. Eerily for us, in scenes that are fully clothed hence sanitized of the body corporeal, our fully clothed and adorned heroines mostly succeed in their mission, with or without compromising their hidden body. Mostly they are temptresses who do not go through with the sexual act, or go through with it for the communal good (Tamar in Gen. 38). Hence and ultimately, or so it seems, they are so much respected that they cannot be shamed into being naked. Their honour remains intact, thus also saving the honour of the [mostly male?] readerly viewer.[18]

Joseph adds Madam Potiphar's beauty to her other seductive qualities, he does not dwell on it. Instead, he names Madam's splendid clothes and the baring of her breasts, arms and legs as seductive elements, in addition of course to her rhetorical moves and persistence.

[17] While the זרה woman is certainly not presented as a saviour heroine but as a death agent, here putting on another garment, be that as it may, conforms to the picture of dress change when a woman figure passes from the domestic into the public sphere, or as a preamble to seduction.

[18] This explanation, of course, cannot be extended to the cases of the non-saviours, the זרה woman in Proverbs and Madam Potiphar. The reluctance to bare the female body is nevertheless evident here too.

Afterthoughts

A quick look in Judith art, from the late Middle Ages through Artemisia Gentileschi and Klimt and until today, shows a different picture. As Mieke Bal[19] and Helen Efthimiadis-Keith,[20] among others, have shown, and as is freely to be examined on the Internet (just type in 'biblical Judith in art' in your search engine),[21] more often than not Judith's naked body, at the very least her naked breasts (interesting, this), dominate the scene of the beheading. This tendency to depict Judith partly naked is certainly stereotypically sexy and in keeping with early modern, modern, and postmodern sensibilities. It also fills in the HB's silence about Judith body, which hides it under her magnificent and alluring clothes. However, as an interpretation, such depictions run counter to biblical descriptions, where the [female!] body is veiled and tightly covered, and clothing — not outright nudity — signifies sexual temptation. The tendency to undress Judith, thus highlighting her as a seductress over and apart from her more 'serious' virtues as leader and politician (not to mention the authoritative religious personality that she is[22]), is a neo-Hellenic attitude further developed; there is much to ponder here, on the need to sexualize [further, visually] biblical female figures. However, as an interpretation, once again, such female nudity disregards the culture that underlines the biblical documents — as it presents itself through its writings. The armour of the would-be biblical seductress is not her body but her protective clothes and accessories. And in that, let us face it, she resembles greatly the largely a-sexual, even though not unemotional, saviour Superwoman of modern comics — be she Wonder Woman, Bionic Woman, or 'just' Super Woman, or another such creature. Such figures do wear seductive clothes (in some cases scanty indeed) and are depicted as having strong emotions, as well as power. They appear sexy. However, has anyone ever caught them *in delicto*? Or, like Judith, do they seem to promise, but, appearances aside, never deliver? For Judith, at the end, is allowed neither sexuality nor enjoyment,

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[19] Mieke Bal, 'Head Hunting: "Judith" on the Cutting Edge of Knowledge', *JSOT* 63 (1994), 3-34. Reprinted in A. Brenner, ed., *A Feminist Companion to Esther, Judith and Susanna* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 253-85.

[20] Helen Efthimiadis-Keith, 'Text and Interpretation: Gender and Violence in the Book of Judith, Scholarly Commentary and the Visual Arts from the Renaissance Onward', *Old Testament Essays* 15.1 (2002), 64-84 (esp. 69).

[21] See, for example, http://www.artble.com/artists/donatello/sculpture/judith_and_holofernes. See now also Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, 'Judith in Art', at the Bible Odyssey project. All accessed August 2014.

[22] On Judith as a religious leader and functionary, see Ora Brison's essay in this volume, 175-99.

with or without Holofernes. She returns home. She changes her clothes again. She is once more a chaste widow.[23]

Judith, finally, remains not only a-sexual but also body-less: whatever role she morphs into — from widow to seductress to man killer to public leader to widow again — she is fully dressed. Indeed, she eats/fasts and sleeps, she walks, she talks: but she has no visual body. For the viewer/ reader her body is concealed, not only unavailable but also nonexistent.[24]

This chaste, body-less Judith may be viewed as the embodiment of the Jewish, or Judean, collective. It is interesting, in this regard, to note that the biblical God shares this body-less trait with her. One can argue the meaning of the *Imago Dei* in Genesis (1.26; 5.1), and the commandment to refrain from visual images (Exod. 20.4 = Deut. 5.8): is it spiritual or physical, and does the commandment refer to images of the Hebrew god or to those of his divine competitors? This god is gendered as male. He has body parts. He walks, talks, gets angry so his face gets red and warm, and experiences other emotions. He has a wife — in metaphor, can it be argued? However, some texts cannot be argued with. For example, he sits in the Jerusalem temple, on a chair, with only the edges of his garments filling the temple (Isa. 6.1). He saunters from Edom as an avenging warrior, his clothes stained with blood (Isa. 63.1-3). Daniel or his mouthpiece sees him as an old man sitting, with white hair, wearing white clothes (Dan. 7.9). Ezekiel sees him as a kind of human image through a haze of fire, first in the temple then as leaving it on a chariot (Ezek. 1 and 10). And he hides in cloud, smoke and fire when he 'reveals' himself to his chosen people: that is, he is always covered, i.e. always 'clothed'. It seems that he has a body (of whatever size), but it is not to be revealed, or not unmistakably, or just at the edges (cf. Exod. 24.10).

The so-called marriage metaphor, in which the biblical god is a sexual partner of his 'wife' or 'wives' (Hosea, Later Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel), does not reveal his body either — it fully reveals, in language, the body of the 'wife', whose punishments include shaming by undressing. Now, if Judith is a post-Hebrew bible representation of Jewishness/Being Judean, if she remains dressed at all times and her body never shows, much like the body of her divine master — then a therapeutic reconciliation of sorts lies at the heart of this story. God and his group of believers are reconciled. The believers, as symbolized by a chaste widow, mend their ways: sexuality is never realized; unlike the 'marriage

[23] However, the comparison between Judith and Super Woman, in all her guises, is an altogether another story. And see Emma England's essay in this volume, 242-58.

[24] Ironically, Holofernes, who is decapitated, has more visible body in his death than Judith in her life.

metaphor' in the Prophets, sexuality in *Judith* is used against the enemy, instead of with it. The price is precisely a loss of sexuality along the move to spirituality. The body is there; we know it is. But, against the grain and against logic, and much like the body of God, it morphs from the physical to the virtual.

Clothing signifies culture.[25]

[25] I became aware of the following essay, and the book in which it appears, at a very late stage in the present volume's composition; it is listed here for interested readers: Meredith Warren, 'A Robe Like Lightning: Clothing Changes and Identification in Joseph and Aseneth', in *Dressing Judeans and Christians in Antiquity* (ed. Kristi Upson-Saia, Carly Daniel-Hughes and Alicia J. Batten; Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2014), 137-55.

Chapter 13

Words and Deeds: Seduction and Power in *Judith* and *Death Proof*

Jan Willem van Henten

> If you do as you have said, your god shall be my god, and you shall live in the palace of King Nebuchadnezzar and be renowned throughout the entire world (Jdt. 11.23, NRSV).

Introduction

Judith is a Jewish story written in Greek, dating from the late second or early first century BCE.[1] Although the book received canonical status only within the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, it has become world famous because of its thrilling storyline. All along the book's extremely rich reception history, Judith is presented as a heroine. The decapitation of Holofernes is often depicted as a triumph, sometimes in the context of a battle of the sexes. Only recently the question came up whether Judith did a good thing.[2] From a pragmatic point of view the answer is: 'Yes, of course!' Judith succeeded in bringing deliverance to the Jewish people whereas the male leaders failed to do so.[3] Nevertheless, especially feminist scholars question Judith's means to achieve her goal. She seduces a non-Jewish man, which clearly counters biblical guidelines (cf. Neh. 13.23-29). She lies to and deceives him, which is morally wrong, all the more so because Holofernes treats her respectfully. And finally, she murders this man in a brutal manner.

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[1] For introductory matters see D.L. Gera, *Judith* (Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 3-109; B. Schmitz and H. Engel, *Judit: Übersetzt und ausgelegt von* (Freiburg: Herder, 2014), 37-69.

[2] E.g.: B. Merideth, 'Desire and Danger: The Drama of Betrayal in Judges and Judith', in *Anti-Covenant: Counter-Reading Women's Lives in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. M. Bal; JSOTSup, 81; Sheffield: Almond, 1989), 63-78; P. Milne, 'What Shall We Do with Judith? A Feminist Reassessment of a Biblical "Heroine"', *Semeia* 62 (1993), 37-58 (117-36 in this volume); L. Day, 'Faith, Character and Perspective in Judith', *JSOT* 95 (2001), 71-93. For further references see H. Efthimiadis-Keith in this volume, 141-63.

[3] This matches the outcome of the story with the song of victory and praise for Judith (Jdt. 15.8–16.20).

In earlier societies Judith's behaviour was no doubt sanctioned by the positive outcome of her endeavour and her exemplary faithfulness to God.[4] Since the issue of the legitimacy of Judith's behaviour has been discussed at length,[5] I will deal here only with one aspect of Judith's performance that needs elaboration, the seduction motif. The word 'seduction' refers in this contribution to behaviour and means applied to attract and win over another person, often but not exclusively with the aim of engaging in sexual intercourse.[6] I will present a narratological and intertextual reading of this motif and analyze how it is connected with power dynamics and the different perspectives of words and deeds.[7]

The discrepancy between words and deeds is important in *Judith*. Judith highlights God's powerful role in the history of her people several times and claims to act with divine power.[8] Strikingly, her statements about God's power are hardly matched by the actual story.[9] When Judith and her servant return to Bethulia, she explains that God has struck Holofernes down by her hand (13.14-15; cf. 8.33; 16.5), but the description of the deed and the proof she shows — Holofernes's head and his canopy — imply that she did it. The praise of the high priest Joaqim and the elders confirms this: '*You* have done all this *with your own hand; you have done great good to Israel, and God is well pleased with it*. May the almighty Lord bless you forever!' (15.10,[10] my emphasis).[11]

I intend to analyze all the relevant passages that contain seductive words and deeds within Judith's broader literary context, and discuss them, by using a movie as a co-text in which the seduction motif is also prominent. The plot of Quentin Tarantino's movie *Death Proof* (US, 2007) partly mirrors the storyline of *Judith*.[12] There are several seduction scenes leading to a violent death in this

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[4] D. DeSilva, 'Judith the Heroine: Lies, Seduction and Murder in Cultural Perspective', *BTB* 36 (2006), 56-61.

[5] Efthimiadis-Keith, 'Judith', with references.

[6] Cf. http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/seduce (accessed 28 August 2014).

[7] For the relevance of this distinction, see B. Schmitz, *Gedeutete Geschichte. Die Funktion der Reden und Gebete im Buch Judit* (HBS, 40; Freiburg: Herder, 2004).

[8] E.g. Judith's prayer (9.8-9, 11, 14; also 13.19; 16.2, 13) and her words before murdering Holofernes (13.7).

[9] *Judith* contains many statements that God did something (e.g. 4.13; 5.9, 12, 13-14; 7.25, 28; 11.12, 22; 13.11; 14.10; 16.2), but an actual deed by God is not described apart from the reference in 4.13 to God's hearing and seeing the suffering of the people: Schmitz, 'Gott als Figur' (forthcoming).

[10] The translations of *Judith* here are those of the NRSV, unless indicated otherwise.

[11] Differently: Milne, 'What Shall We Do with Judith?', 54-55 (135-36 in this volume), who argues that Judith acts as a helper-seducer, helping the deity-hero.

[12] G. De Guytenaere, 'Faster, Judith! Kill! Kill!' (M.A. diss., Amsterdam, 2011) compares the female image of Judith to the images of the female heroes in *Death Proof* and analyses how

movie. Its first half focuses on the main male character who kills several women with the help of his armoured car. In the second half the film depicts how three women take revenge on this man by using his own means, a car, as a weapon, and finally murder him. The seduction motif is complex and ambiguous in *Death Proof*, and here too there are striking discrepancies between the words and the deeds of those who seduce others. Co-reading this movie together with the *Judith* story invites readers of Judith to re-interpret the seduction motif. In the following sections I will (1) briefly summarize the plots of *Judith* and *Death Proof*; (2) argue that there are multiple and bi-directional seductions in both works; and (3) analyze the interconnections between seduction, stereotyping and power as well as (4) the application of several devices to make the seduction of the other successful.

1. The Stories of *Judith* and *Death Proof*

My narratological approach to *Judith* implies that I read the book as a story, and deal pragmatically with those techniques of the narrator that are relevant for my subject.[13] The *Judith* story is a report about a punitive expedition launched by the Assyrian king Nebuchadnezzar and a miraculous delivery by Judith, the main character. The storyline implies a double power conflict — Nebuchadnezzar vs. the Jewish God, and the Assyrian commander Holofernes and his men vs. the Jews — but only the second conflict is actually narrated.

Tarantino's *Death Proof* is a tribute to classical movies about car chases, and also builds on the so-called Grindhouse genre, which is unique to the United States.[14] The low-budget movies shown in 'grindhouses', i.e., movie theatres that feature films often focused on the exploitation of women, were popular in the 1960s and 1970s.[15] They were regularly produced in pairs to keep the costs low. *Death Proof* is a double feature with *Planet Terror*, directed by Robert Rodriguez (US, 2007), and the two-movie combination is entitled

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these women threaten patriarchal power structures. I thank her for pointing out some of the fascinating correspondences between *Judith* and *Death Proof*. My own analysis takes a different perspective by focusing on the seduction motif.

[13] My approach lines up with that of the Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative series, edited by Irene de Jong and others (Leiden: Brill, 2007–).

[14] Q. Tarantino, *Death Proof* (US: Dimension Films, 2007), consulted through the unrated DVD edition.

[15] Several techniques create the impression of a retro movie: the movie is manually damaged, the audience observes scratches and missing shots as well as cracks. There are photos and posters of (female) bodies stylized according to tropes from the 1950s to the 1970s (e.g. in Julia's apartment and Guero's restaurant), including a billboard of Julia as a female Tarzan.

Grindhouse.[16] *Death Proof*'s first part focuses on stuntman Mike (Kurt Russell), a serial killer who spends his time observing women and seducing possible victims to take a ride with him in his muscle car from the 1970s, which has a death-proof driver seat. Seducing women and murdering them with his car gives him the ultimate pleasure. The characters in *Death Proof* hint at sex, as Holofernes does in Judith, but it never actually comes to sex in the movie, apart from what, perhaps, can be called virtual sex by the use of a car (§4).

The movie's first part, set in the city of Austin (Texas), focuses on four women who are about to celebrate a weekend together at a lake house. They visit a restaurant and a bar to get in the right mood. Mike follows them and tries to seduce them, and in between he manages to persuade another woman, who needs a lift, to come with him. She is brutally murdered in the car by Mike's extremely violent manner of driving, being trapped in the plexi-glass cage of the passenger seat. Next, Mike pursues the four girls driving to the lake house. He murders them through a head-on collision, driving in top speed, putting his headlights on only at the very last moment.

Fourteen months after Mike's recovery from the crash in Austin, he is observing four possible female victims in Lebanon (Tennessee): Lee (Mary Elizabeth Winstead), Abernathy (Rosario Dawson), Kim (Thracie Thoms) and Zoe (Zoe Bell). These four women have a few days off from the shooting of a movie. Two of them, Zoe and Kim, are stuntwomen.[17] Several muscle cars feature in the movie's second half.[18] Zoe, who plays 'ship's mast', a dangerous game on the hood of a car that is driving very fast, is looking for a specific vintage sports car. She has located one of these cars, a 1970 Dodge Challenger with a 440 engine, which is for sale. Abernathy manages to persuade the car's owner to allow a test ride. When Zoe, Kim and Abernathy drive off in the Challenger, Mike follows them and a car chase begins, which takes more than *twenty* minutes of screen time. When Kim and Zoe play ship's mast, Mike attacks the women's car by ramming it. The chase ends in a crash, with Zoe falling off the car. Mike is satisfied, but when he leaves in his car, Kim shoots him, and Zoe returns alive and well. The three decide to chase Mike, reversing the gender and power roles. From now on Mike is the one who is afraid. He is

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[16] M. Langer, 'Exploitation Film', *Film History* 6.3 (1994), 291-92; C. Benson-Allott, 'Grindhouse: An Experiment in the Death of Cinema', *Film Quarterly* 62 (2008), 20-24; de Guytenaere, 'Judit', 6-7. Russ Meyer gave a boost to the Grindhouse genre by featuring power women with big breasts undermining male supremacy; K. Hatch, 'The Sweeter the Kitten the Sharper the Claws: Russ Meyer's Bad Girls', in *Bad, Infamy, Darkness, Evil, and Slime on Screen* (ed. M. Pomerance; Albany: SUNY Press, 2004), 143-55.

[17] One of the four women, Lee, does not participate in the confrontation with Mike and is depicted as a cheerleader.

[18] Kim is driving a 1972 Mustang Grande. Mike's second car is a 1969 Dodge Charger.

presented as whining softy, while the women scream sexually charged slogans at him. After a long and brutal chase Mike crashes. The women finish him off with their bare hands. Like the death of the five women in the movie's first half, Mike's end is emphasized by the ingenious use of the camera and slow-motion editing. The audience gets the impression of a carousel of women's fists that target Mike's face in high speed. He dies when Abernathy's boot crushes his head, visually echoing God's punishment for the Serpent by the woman (and her descendants) in Gen. 3.15b.

2. Multiple and Bi-Directional Seductions

Death Proof includes several seduction scenes, which implies that seduction is a complex and a bi-directional process. Cars are important instruments of seduction (§4) and shots of departing cars frame a series of seduction scenes in a restaurant and a bar in the movie's first part (0.8.27-38; 42.55-43.20).[19] Three women (DJ Jungle Julia, Shanna and Arlene) have dinner at Guero's before catching up with a friend who will join them at a lake house. Shots of Mike and his car imply that he is following the women. Mike is in his fifties and not really good-looking, having a long scar across his face. Later on we see him having dinner, while the girls are having drinks. Julia and her friends form Mike's main target, but he overhears that another woman present, Pam (Rose McGowan), needs a lift because her friend abandoned her. Mike seduces Pam step by step (0.24.16-42.54), and what he says plays an important part in her seduction.[20] He boosts Pam's confidence by indicating that he is a teetotaler, and announces that he will have an alcohol-free piña colada as the highlight of his evening. Mike's muscle car finally tips the balance: when they go outside, Pam is quickly seduced by his retro sports car, with its impressive and aggressive front. She teases Mike at the hood and accepts the lift that leads to her death.

The seduction involving Pam and Mike is part of a larger cluster of seduction scenes that focus on Jungle Julia Lucai, Arlene and Mike, with a lap dance as the central motif (we shall return to this below). By way of flashbacks, Arlene and the audience slowly learn about the promise of a lap dance made by Jungle Julia (Sydney Poitier) — who is a disk jockey — during her radio program that morning. Julia has promised that her friend Arlene (Vanessa Ferlito) would perform a free lap dance for the man who would find her through her code name

[19] The references to the movie give the screening time in hours, minutes and seconds, based on the DVD version.

[20] Mike has a Silver Satin Jacket with an embroidered 'ICY HOT' patch on the back; he smokes Chesterfields like a chimney; and he eats disgustingly with his fingers (0.21.31-22.10).

'Butterfly', buy her a drink and quote a few lines from a poem.[21] The idea behind this was to find 'a fucking hot and hysterically funny' guy for Arlene, with whom she could have sex. Julia explains this in bits and pieces, and gives Arlene the run-around by simulating the role of the seductive guy. Arlene responds in the appropriate stereotypical manner, until Julia reveals that she should offer a free lap dance to the guy who would actually approach her this way. Arlene is disappointed and refuses to do the lap dance, although Julia threatens that everybody in Austin will think she is 'chicken shit'.

A few hours later the lap dance motif gets a follow-up in the setting of a bar (Huck's). It is anticipated by two scenes, which show first Julia and then Arlene dancing alone in a sexy way (0.14.44-15.28; 0.27.00-27.44). When the women go outside to drink and smoke pot, Mike finally approaches Arlene by offering her as well as Julia a beer. He points out that he knows who 'Butterfly' is and quotes the lines from the poem in front of her. Arlene is frightened because she realizes that Mike is the driver of the muscle car. The conversation between Mike and Arlene is a power game (0.33.35-37.19). Mike wants Arlene to do the lap dance, but she refuses. He seems to accept that by saying that he is a decent man and would not force her. But, next, he seduces her to do it by saying that he would put her in his book as 'chicken shit', repeating, in fact, an earlier threat by Julia. They go inside and Arlene's lap dance is shown from beginning to end (0.37.33-40.13), with the camera first focusing on Arlene's ass, as is so typical for this movie. The scene finally breaks off clumsily, like a silent movie.[22]

The observations gleaned from *Death Proof* about seduction as complex and bi-directional, applied by women as well as men, invite us to see whether the seduction motif in *Judith* goes beyond Judith's seduction of Holofernes. The *Judith* story also features multiple seduction scenes, and men participate in them as much as Judith does. Judith seduces Holofernes and the commander's soldiers, but the soldiers and Holofernes also try to seduce Judith. In the period from Judith's departure from Bethulia to Holofernes's decapitation, there is a series of closely related episodes wherein the seduction motif is prominent.

After their departure, Judith and her servant soon meet a patrol of Assyrian soldiers in the valley (10.11-16). The combination of Judith's statements to Holofernes's soldiers and her shining beauty does the trick. The dialogue between Judith and the soldiers already implies that seduction is a bi-directional process. Judith's words to the soldiers contain three blunt lies: the reason for her

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[21] The lines are: 'The woods are lovely dark and deep/and I have promises to keep/and miles to go before I sleep', which are taken from Robert Frost's poem, *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* (1922).

[22] The song from the '50s during the scene, 'Down in Mexico' by the Coasters ('a chick... who did a dance I never saw before'), makes the lap dance even 'hotter'.

departure, the 'Hebrews' becoming prey for the Assyrians, and 'good' advice for Holofernes (10.12-13). The soldiers fall for her words, which are emphasized by a repetitive vocabulary. While hearing the words they take good notice of Judith's beauty, which is highlighted once again: 'She was in their eyes marvelously beautiful' (10.14). The Assyrian soldiers even work with Judith and advise her to repeat her words before Holofernes, because in that case he will treat her well (10.16).

The next round takes place in the Assyrian camp. The narrative slows down, preparing for Judith's first encounter with Holofernes. Accompanied to the camp by a hundred soldiers, she makes a stunning appearance 'in the entire camp' (10.17-18), which is remarkable because this takes place during the night. The narrator situates Judith in front of Holofernes's tent.[23] The soldiers are focalized and point to Judith's exceptional beauty (10.19). At this stage the narratees are eager to see how the Assyrian commander responds to Judith's appearance, but the soldiers' stereotypical statement postpones this (10.19; §3). When Judith and Holofernes finally meet, everyone marvels at the beauty of her face (10.23), and this note is the take-off for a series of attempts to seduce one another (10.23–13.10). All in all the *Judith* story includes the following passages that are connected with seduction: (1) preparations by change of attire (10.2-5); (2) seduction of the soldiers in the valley (10.11-16); (3) first meeting of Holofernes with the invitation to eat at his table (10.17–12.5); (4) Judith invited to Holofernes's banquet (12.10-15); and (5) the banquet as finale (12.16–13.10). The second part of *Death Proof* includes several seduction scenes connected with a seductive car, the Dodge Challenger owned by Jasper (1.15.51-24.9). Zoe persuades Kim to play ship's mast if they are allowed to test the car (1.16.48-19.14) and Abernathy persuades Zoe and Kim to participate in the test ride by promising to seduce the owner (1.19.14-22.05). She does this unscrupulously by suggesting that her friend Lee will give him a blowjob (1.22.12-23.46).

3. Stereotyping and Power Games

Analyzing the seduction scenes in *Judith* and in *Death Proof* shows that seduction goes hand in hand with stereotyping and power dynamics. Seduction is a manipulation of the other that builds on the other's expectations, and stereotypical performance is one of the ways to feed those expectations. This process implies that seduction is an intricate interplay of words and deeds that can be seen as a power game or even a contest:

[23] Holofernes's tent contrasts with Judith's tent (luxury vs. fasting; 8.5, 36; 10.20-21; 12.1).

> … séduction, c'est à dire une relation duelle et agonistique…[24]

The stereotyping starts already with the characterization of the protagonists. The Judith character is highly ambiguous, as many scholars have argued.[25] She is introduced as a beautiful and extremely god-fearing secluded woman (8.1-8), who hides her beauty behind sackcloth (8.5; 9.1; 10.3). Entering a new role she seduces the Assyrian enemies, which echoes characteristics of the 'strange' woman from Proverbs 7.[26] Holofernes is the most powerful man but one among the Assyrians, but is characterized as a weak and naïve person. The detailed description of the moments before Judith actually meets Holofernes (10.18-22) characterizes both protagonists. The fact that all of Holofernes's guards and servants come outside in order to accompany Judith inside, while all the soldiers are standing around her (10.20), depicts her as a royal highness. Next the narrator focuses on Holofernes, who is the only man in the camp still lying in his bed (10.21)! The description of the location where he sleeps characterizes him as a very wealthy person but also as an effeminate man: 'Holofernes was resting on his bed under a canopy (κωνώπιον)[27] that was woven with purple and gold, emeralds and other precious stones' (10.21).[28] Holofernes's soldiers are naïve as well: they fall immediately for Judith's beauty and words, not taking any precautions.

Apart from Mike, the men in *Death Proof* play a minor and stereotypic role. They are mostly eager to find a woman to sleep with, but lack the qualities to realize this. Mike's character has already been discussed (§2): step by step the audience learns that he is stuck on a perverse sublimation of sex, the murdering

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[24] J. Baudrillard, *De la séduction* (Paris: Galilée, 1979), 144. Differently: A. Ross, 'Baudrillard's Bad Attitude', in *Seduction and Theory: Reading of Gender, Representation, and Rhetoric* (ed. D. Hunter; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 214-25: 'Seduction…is a "feminine" challenge to the "masculine" principles of the nineteenth-century bourgeois worship of nature and production' (216). Cf. also the character of John the Seducer in Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*.

[25] Detailed discussion: A.-M. Schol-Wetter, *Judging by Her: Reconfiguring Israel in Ruth, Esther, and Judith* (Utrecht: Impress, 2014), 181-256.

[26] A.J. Levine, 'Sacrifice and Salvation: Otherness and Domestication in the Book of Judith', in *A Feminist Companion to Esther, Judith and Susanna* (ed. A. Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 208-23 (214-15, 220-23); D.F. Sawyer, 'Gender Strategies in Antiquity: Judith's Performance', *Feminist Theology* 28 (2001), 9-26 (25-26); B. Schmitz, 'Casting Judith: The Construction of Role Patterns in the Book of Judith', in *Biblical Figures in Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature* (ed. H. Lichtenberger and U. Mittmann-Richert; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 77-94; Schol-Wetter, *Judging*, 241-42.

[27] Also 13.9, 15; 16.19. See B. Schmitz, 'Holofernes's Canopy in the Septuagint', in *The Sword of Judith: Judith Studies across the Disciplines* (ed. K. R. Brine, E. Ciletti and H. Lähnemann; Cambridge: Open Book, 2010), 71-80.

[28] Cf. the silver lamps mentioned in 10.22.

of women with his cars. The characterization of the women in the film is mixed. The first shots of Julia and some of the other female characters focus on their seductive bodies, highlighting especially their feet and ass. The word 'ass' is sexist, of course, but is constantly used in the film, also by the women. The stereotypical depiction of female bodies in *Death Proof* may build on the exploitation motif typical for the grindhouse genre, but it should be noted that other female characters — Abernathy, Zoe and Kim — thoroughly deconstruct this stereotype. Zoe and Kim are independent stuntwomen who look good but are not obsessed with men and sex, as some of the other female characters are.[29] The bodily characterization of Abernathy is ambiguous. Her haircut echoes the typical hair with rolled bangs of the famous pin-up star Bettie Page from the 1950s, but it gives Abernathy a masculine look, which is supported by the style of her skirt and long boots.[30]

In *Death Proof* seduction is clearly related to gender stereotypes. The scenes that lead up to the test drive in the Dodge Challenger express appallingly sexist stereotypes. When the four women arrive at Jasper's place (i.e., the owner of the Challenger), he approaches them with a beer in his hands and says: 'What do you horny cows want?' (1.16.06-7). He clearly knows that his car is seductive. Abernathy arranges for a test ride by suggesting that Lee is going to give him a blowjob (1.22.12-23.46). She indicates with a photo in a magazine that Lee is an actress in the cheerleader movie they are shooting, which Jasper interprets as a porno movie. When the three take off in the Challenger, the camera shows Jasper standing in front of Lee (1.23.46-24.09), who is sleeping in a chair, apparently easy prey for Jasper. Lee wakes up and Jasper chuckles in anticipation, but the movie never shows what happens afterwards between them. Nevertheless, these brief scenes construct very negative stereotypes: men as simpletons who are stuck on sex (Jasper), women as unscrupulous seductresses (Abernathy) or docile girls who are happy to satisfy men sexually (Lee).

Stereotyping in Judith happens when she interacts with the Assyrians. When she talks to the soldiers in the valley (10.11-16), she is making fun of them without them noticing that.[31] She diligently refers to Holofernes as the commander-in-chief (ἀρχιστρατηγός) of the Assyrian army (10.13), which is hilarious for readers who know what will happen. She claims she will bring Holofernes 'words of truth' (ῥήματα ἀληθείας) and proposes a plan to conquer the mountainous area without losing any men. This is totally unrealistic, but it becomes true

[29] This is, e.g., apparent from the conversations of women among themselves, who also ridicule this point.

[30] The association with Bettie Page is intended; see: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1028528/trivia?ref_=tt_ql_2 (accessed 1 August 2014).

[31] Cf. Levine, 'Sacrifice', 213: 'By her sexually charged presence the widow Judith therefore threatens the masculine ethos of the Assyrian army'.

somehow. Her words trigger a statement by Holofernes's soldiers that implies that all Jewish males have to be killed, because otherwise they would outwit the entire world (10.19).[32] The statement points to a stereotypical contrast, *beautiful but foolish women versus smart men*, a binary opposition that is also prominent in *Death Proof*. It stereotypes the Jews in a negative way, but also anticipates what will happen during the seduction of Holofernes, who is outwitted by Judith's words. Judith appears to be both beautiful and smart, which re-interprets the relationship between Judith and Holofernes's soldiers by making them into fools and implying a reversal of gender roles. The playfulness of the soldiers' statement in 10.19, from a narrative viewpoint, results from the discrepancy between what is said and what will actually happen. In hindsight, the soldiers' statement is true, but with modifications: it is just one Jewish woman who outwits one of the most important Assyrian men.

Stereotyping and power dynamics go hand in hand during the banquet (12.10–13.10) on Judith's fourth day in the camp, which leads to Holofernes's emasculation.[33] It concerns a private event; only the personal servants are invited. Bagoas, the eunuch in charge of Holofernes's personal affairs, has to persuade Judith to join them, because male honour is at stake. Holofernes's order for Bagoas includes two verbs that are in this context euphemisms hinting at having sex with Judith: 'For it would be a disgrace if we let such a woman go without keeping her company (ὁμιλήσαντες; NRSV: "having intercourse with her"). If we do not invite her (ἐπισπασώμεθα; NRSV: "seduce her"), she will laugh at us' (12.12).[34] The sexual implication of Holofernes's words becomes explicit only later on (12.16). The commander's motivation implies supremacy in the power relationship between him and Judith, and also a double stereotype: Holofernes is a man whose honour would be damaged if he would not sleep with the beautiful woman staying within the realm of his authority, and women deride men if they do not take the initiative to have sex with them. Bagoas's persuasion of Judith is also ambiguous: he calls her 'the pretty girl' (ἡ παιδίσκη ἡ καλή, 12.13), which can also mean 'the beautiful prostitute'.[35] Judith's response, finally, is also ambiguous, because of the phrase 'my l/Lord', repeating a phrase of Bagoas, where it refers to Holofernes. Judith seems to acknowledge the authority of Holofernes — 'who am I to refuse my l/Lord?...' (12.14) — but,

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[32] The verb κατασοφίζομαι, 'outwit', also occurs in LXX Exod. 1.10, which legitimates the pharaoh's harsh treatment of Israel.

[33] M. Bal, 'Head-Hunting: "Judith" on the Cutting Edge of Knowledge', in Brenner, ed., *Feminist Companion to Esther*, 253-85.

[34] The phrase 'be honoured in his presence' and the reference to serving in the house of Nebuchadnezzar (12.13) may be other hints at sex, or even a status for Judith as Holofernes's or Nebuchadnezzar's concubine; Gera, *Judith*, 382.

[35] *LSJ*, 1287; Schmitz and Engel, *Judit*, 348.

from her perspective, her seemingly obedient statement anticipates the act of divinely sanctioned deliverance she plans to commit. The well-known end of this episode indicates a dramatic reversal of the power relationship (13.2-10, 16). Holofernes becomes the victim of his own strategy to seduce Judith, drinking himself into a stupor, and his head and canopy are brought to Bethulia as a trophy.

4. Bodies, Words and Other Instruments of Seduction

Both *Death Proof* and *Judith* highlight the female body and words as powerful instruments of seduction. Exactly the combination of Judith's beauty and her clever words makes her seduction so successful. Other applied means of seduction include food and drink, and in *Death Proof* cars are, of course, very important tools.

After her prayer for divine support (ch. 9), summarized by 'all these words' (πάντα τὰ ῥήματα ταῦτα, 10.1), Judith prepares for the seduction of males (10.2-5).[36] The narrator suggests that Judith aims at deceiving men in general (10.4), but from hindsight it is clear that Holofernes and his soldiers will be targeted.[37] The change of attire and the sudden display of Judith's femininity mark an important transition in the story. The description builds up tension and highlights a change in the main character, as the analogy with contemporary superheroes like Spider Man or Cat Woman implies.[38] The new attire is connected with the special mission of the hero, but also displays a specific and constructed gender identity.[39] From her introduction the narratees know already that Judith is very beautiful (8.7). In contrast to *Death Proof*, which shows many close-ups of female bodies, Judith's beauty is emphasized but never specified (10.3-4, 7, 14, 19, 23; 16.6-9).[40]

Judith stages herself as a seductress by a series of activities (10.3-4). Her first acts focus on her entire body: bathing and anointing with precious fragrant oil. Then she moves on to her hair, which is braided, and her head, partly covered by a tiara (10.3).[41] Next she puts on the festive dress which she used to wear when

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[36] C. Rakel, *Judit: über Schönheit, Macht und Wiederstand im Krieg: Eine feministisch-intertextuelle Lektüre* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 128-33; Schmitz, 'Casting', 87-88; Gera, *Judith*, 327-33.

[37] As indicated in the flashback in 16.3, which partly repeats the vocabulary of 10.3-4.

[38] Cf. England in this volume, 246-54.

[39] F. Weltzien, 'Changing Dress in the Display of the Superhero Genre', *Fashion Theory* 9 (2005), 229-50. Superheroes share a single life with Judith, but change outfit many times.

[40] Cf. Brenner-Idan in this volume, 212-25, and additional literature there.

[41] The vocabulary repeats LXX Isa. 3.18-20: Rakel, *Judit*, 278-82. *Mitra* can refer to a girdle, a headband, a diadem or an oriental headdress like a turban or a tiara.

her husband was still alive (10.3), a detail which may invite the reader to identify with the former husband, and so be seduced.[42] The details can also signify that Judith will be active again as a sexual partner.[43] Verse 4 moves on to Judith's limbs, most of which are adorned with jewelry: feet (sandals and anklets), arms (bracelets), fingers and ears (rings). The jewelry appeals to the eye as well as the ear, by its jingling; sound is also an instrument of seduction.[44]

Apart from Lee's cheerleader's dress (above, §3), clothing hardly plays a role in the seduction scenes of *Death Proof*, but sound is very important, because the music evokes a sultry retro atmosphere, adding to the seductiveness of some of the women. For example, Arlene dances in front of a vintage jukebox, which plays rocky music while the camera focuses on her ass.[45] Music also helps to interpret the events in *Death Proof*. The first line of a song which is put on by Arlene — by Joe Tex (0.27.00-27.44) — points to the ambiguities of seduction. It also confirms the female stereotype of women who are deceived. At the same time it may anticipate Arlene's death later that night: 'People, I've been misled and I've been afraid…'

The narrator concludes Judith's dressing up with a few generalizations[46] and finally points to Judith's aim: 'to seduce the eyes (εἰς ἀπάτησιν ὀφθαλμῶν; NRSV: "entice") of all the men who might see her' (10.4).[47] The verb ἀπατάω probably means 'seduce' here.[48] It also has the connotation of deceit, as Judith's reference in her prayer to the punishment of the Shechemites for the rape of Dinah implies (9.2-3).[49] Judith's deceit is mirrored by Holofernes's intentions. Similar to the aim of most men in *Death Proof*, Holofernes's ultimate goal is seducing Judith to sleep with him (12.1–13.2). That this is so becomes clear by a flashback in Jdt. 12.16: '…for he had been waiting for an opportunity to seduce her (ἀπατῆσαι αὐτὴν) from the day he first saw her'.[50]

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[42] See also 16.22: 'Many desired to marry her, but she gave herself to no man all the days of her life…'

[43] Levine, 'Sacrifice', 209.

[44] A. Bach, *Women, Seduction, and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 203; Day, 'Faith', 84.

[45] This is Tarantino's own jukebox with his handwritten titles.

[46] The rare verb καλλωπίζω ('make beautiful') also occurs in LXX Gen. 38.14.

[47] This also invites the readers to visualize Judith's attire.

[48] Cf. LXX Sus. 56: H. Engel, *Die Susanna-Erzählung: Einleitung, Übersetzung und Kommentar zum Septuaginta-Tekst und zur Theodotion-Bearbeitung* (OBO, 61; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1985), 126; Rakel, *Judit*, 209-15.

[49] C. Spicq, *Notes de lexicographique néo-testamentaire*, vol. 1 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1978), 116-18; Schmitz, 'Casting', 88. The references to Gen. 34 in Jdt. 9.10 and 13.16 imply a double analogy as well as a contrast: like Dinah the Jews should be revenged, which legitimates Judith's performance, but Judith is not raped as Dinah was.

[50] See also Jdt. 14.14: Bagoas assumes that Holofernes is still sleeping with Judith.

Judith's metamorphosis is emphasized again when she and her servant leave Bethulia (10.6-10) and the elders at the gate are 'very astounded at her beauty' (10.7).[51] Remarkably, instead of stopping her because of the obvious danger to leave the town by night, they let her go and express the hope that God will make her succeed (10.7-8).[52] Judith's use of her beauty and manipulation with words are highlighted when she finally meets Holofernes and a give-and-take in words starts (10.23–12.15). After she pays her respects to the commander (10.23), he tries to put her at ease by saying that she will stay alive if she is willing to serve King Nebuchadnezzar (11.1-4).[53] Holofernes's friendly advice implies a victory in the power conflict that underlies the story. With ambiguous statements and plain lies Judith convinces Holofernes that she will do as he says. She also points to a brilliant strategy for defeating the Jews (11.4-19; esp. 11.7-8, 16-17; cf. 12.4, 6). Her words are not only rendered but also highlighted by explicit references to words and acts of speaking.[54] The to and fro of the statements by Judith and Holofernes implies a power game of words.

Holofernes invites Judith to speak up and explain the aim of her trip in 11.3, which in the wider context implies that he invites misfortune upon himself: 'But now tell me why you have fled from them and have come over to us. In any event, you have come to safety [i.e. with me, Holofernes]…' This is one of the famous *double entendres* of the *Judith* story and can also be translated as: '…you have come to rescue [namely the Jewish people]'.[55] Judith's response includes another *double entendre*, depending on the referent for *kurios* in her statement (11.5): 'I will say nothing false to my l/Lord (κυρίῳ; NRSV: "lord") this night'. If 'my l/Lord' is taken as a reference to Holofernes, Judith abides by Holofernes's words; but if it refers to God it anticipates the commander's ruin. She explains that the Jews have sinned against God and, therefore, are an easy prey for Holofernes (11.9-19; cf. 5.5-21). The narratees know that this is a lie, because Judith has argued in front of the elders that the people have not sinned (8.18-20). Nevertheless, Holofernes and his servants are completely seduced by Judith's words (11.20-23). They admire her wisdom (σοφία, 11.20) and state: 'No other woman from one end of the earth to the other looks as beautiful or speaks so wisely' (11.21).[56] Holofernes's final words in this conversation highlight the interplay between words and deeds and anticipates the outcome of Judith's

[51] For Judith's beauty, see also 8.7; 10.3-4, 14, 19, 23; 16.6-9; and Rakel, *Judit*, 202-27.

[52] Jdt. 13.13 confirms that rape was the plausible outcome of Judith's journey: the inhabitants of Bethulia hardly believe that she returns safely.

[53] Detailed analysis of the dialogue between Holofernes and Judith in ch. 11 can be found in Schmitz, *Gedeute Geschichte*, 318-50.

[54] Jdt. 11.3, 5, 6, 8-10, 19-21, 23.

[55] See also 11.16, 22-23.

[56] This verse contrasts with Jdt. 10.19.

strategy: 'If *you do as you have said* (ἐὰν ποιήσῃς καθὰ ἐλάλησας), your god shall be my god, and you shall live in the palace of King Nebuchadnezzar and be renowned throughout the entire world' (11.23, my emphasis). The sentence is a pointer to the complex relation between words and deeds in this story, while its conditional introduction creates tension for the narratees.

As indicated, Holofernes is eager to sleep with Judith the moment he sees her (12.16). The first step of his strategy to seduce Judith is to impress her with a prestigious meal (12.1-5). His second move is the banquet (πότος) that leads to his death (12.10–13.10).[57] He orders that Judith be brought to the place where his dinnerware is kept (12.1), presumably the tent where he has his meals. The reference to silver dinnerware (see also 10.21) indicates that Holofernes is a commander who is keen on luxury — which is striking during the circumstances of a siege. It also implies that he intends to seduce Judith by allowing her to participate in his own luxurious lifestyle, which would confirm his prestige and magnanimity.[58] This is also apparent from his order to (literally) 'spread out' (καταστρῶσαι)[59] plates of his food and to offer her from his wine (12.1). Who would not fall for that?

Judith's refusal to take from Holofernes's food and wine because it would be an offense (12.2) probably implies that she keeps *kashrut*, but it is also part of her strategy that leads to a safe return after killing Holofernes.[60] From the perspective of seduction it means that Judith plays 'hard to get'. Holofernes tries so hard to treat her like a gentleman that it is comical. Judith responds with another *double entendre*: 'As surely as you live, my lord, your servant will not use up the supplies I have with me before the l/Lord [NRSV: "Lord"][61] carries out by my hand what he has determined' (12.4). For Holofernes as focalizer, Judith's statement implies that she will help him to succeed; but the repetition of κύριος ('l/Lord') can refer to Holofernes as well as to Judith's God. From her perspective, the formula 'as surely as you live, my lord' hints at the execution of her plan and therefore ridicules Holofernes. This implies for the narratees that Judith hints already at this stage at a reversal of power. Her words imply very different deeds, depending on the focalizer. In short, Judith survives her refusal, Holofernes's servants bring her to her tent and she can eat her own food and even gets the commander's permission to leave the camp and pray (12.5-9).

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[57] Although Jdt. 12.11 refers to eating and drinking, drinking seems to be the main point of the event.

[58] K. Vössing, *Mensa regia: Das Bankett beim hellenistischen König und beim römischen Kaiser* (Beiträge zur Altertumskunde, 193; Munich: Saur, 2004).

[59] NRSV translates: 'set a table'. The verb also occurs in Jdt. 7.14, 25; 14.4.

[60] Schol-Wetter, *Judging*, 201.

[61] Strikingly, the article before κύριος is missing in several MSS.

Before participating in Holofernes's banquet, Judith dresses and beautifies herself once again (12.15). This time the narrator's description focuses on the setting at the start of the banquet, which characterizes what will happen. He highlights Judith's position in the tent, right in front of Holofernes (12.15), on the lambskins that Bagoas has given. The lambskins are a signifier for Holofernes that Judith would behave according to his plan of seduction.[62] The servant's act of putting the skins in Holofernes's tent also foregrounds Judith's entrance, told in the next verse. She makes a stunning appearance, as Holofernes's reaction to her entrance shows. At this moment the narrator reveals Holofernes's intentions (12.16, above), which is logical from Holofernes's point of view: everything seems to happen as planned. Judith had accepted the invitation forwarded by Bagoas (12.10-14). Any signal given by her seems to indicate that she behaves as he wished she would. This is also implied by the subsequent exchange of words, which focuses euphemistically on eating and drinking (12.17-20). Judith drinks with Holofernes, as indicated in another ambiguous statement: 'I will gladly drink, my lord, because today is the greatest day in my whole life' (12.17). Holofernes assumes that his expectations are going to be fulfilled; however, from Judith's perspective, the words anticipate her triumph over him.

Judith's seduction is utterly successful: Holofernes is so pleased with her that he drinks more wine than he ever has. This characterizes him as a weak and simple man, not at all as a successful commander. As a matter of fact, Judith and Holofernes cut across a stereotype expressed in one of *Death Proof*'s seduction scenes, namely that men can easily seduce women by loading them with booze.[63] The *finale* takes place at night. The narrator highlights that Judith and Holofernes are alone at this stage (13.2, 4); the other guests have left, weary of the heavy drinking.[64] The description of Holofernes stretched out on his bed, dead drunk (13.2; cf. 13.15), is comical: Holofernes is where he wanted to be, but incapable of executing his plan. His bed — which is repeatedly mentioned (13.2, 4, 6, 7) — is foregrounded in the description and signals two things if one interprets it with an eye to other references to beds in Judith: it highlights that for the male protagonist this is the end of the story (cf. 8.3 and 9.3), which is already anticipated in 10.21. The bed is also the location of justified punishment for foreign males who dare to rape Israelite women (cf. 9.3).

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[62] Gera, *Judith*, 385. The noun κώδιον (diminutive of κῶας) occurs once elsewhere in the Septuagint (2 Esd. 3.15), in a different context.

[63] *Death Proof*, 0.17.51-18.43; 0.18.54-19.08; 0.22.04-49; 0.26.11-39; 0.33.35-43.

[64] NRSV: 'because the banquet had lasted so long'.

Holofernes's ultimate failure to seduce Judith triggers a final observation about cars in *Death Proof*.[65] Cars are not only instruments of seduction, as indicated above, but also tools for realizing a virtual kind of sex. The comments of a sheriff after the murder of Julia and her friends suggest that Mike's motive was sex (0.51.58-52.18). The hood ornament on Mike's cars, an angry duck, highlighted several times, visually points at sex. The obvious association *duck–dick* is confirmed by camera shots when Mike is observing Zoe and Kim playing ship's mast with the Challenger. While Kim is driving fast, Zoe is lying flat on the hood of the car, holding on to it through leather belts attached to the frames of the door windows (1.24.20-28.48). The camera focuses on Mike's crotch while he is sitting on the hood of his car with the duck ornament between his legs, observing Zoe and Kim playing ship's mast through his binoculars (1.28.49-29.02). Combining this image with the visualization of the game, with Zoe lying on her back at the other hood, evokes associations with a bondage scene. These associations also imply that the long car chase that follows is, in fact, a sexual combat. Bumping into the other car is a kind of penetration and, finally, the ruining of Mike's car basically means emasculating him. The sexual language shouted by Mike as well as the women during the chase further strengthens this interpretation.

Conclusion

Co-reading *Judith* with *Death Proof* offers a fresh perspective on the theme of seduction in both works. Seduction appears to be complex, bi-directional and aimed for by both men and women. It is a power game that goes hand in hand with deceiving the other. Words are an important tool, in addition to physical beauty, luxury, food, drink and cars. Seduction aims at the manipulation of others by seeming to feed their expectations, which makes stereotypical behaviour an obvious means for achieving one's goal. At the same time, the elaboration of the seduction motif in both *Judith* and *Death Proof* defies gender stereotypes through ambiguities, deconstruction and role inversion.

[65] Phones (text messages) play a minor role as instruments of seduction in *Death Proof*.

Chapter 14

Violent Superwomen: Super Heroes or Super Villains? Judith, Wonder Woman and Lynndie England*

Emma England

The biblical heroine Judith of Bethulia is a female superhero. Circumstances surrounding her most famous act — the beheading of Holofernes — will be read together with the modern archetype[1] of the superhero, as given form in American comic books.[2] What is a superhero? According to B.J. Oropeza, superheroes share one or more traits: superpowers received by accident or chance, costumes indicating multiple identities and absent parents. They experience a great tragedy as an incentive to becoming a hero; uphold justice before the law; and, finally, mimic God with their noble origins and salvific abilities.[3] Judith is the first of my superheroes; the second is Wonder Woman. The latter's solo comic has had the longest run of issues and been franchised into other media, making her the most successful female comic book superhero in history. My

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[1] For the superhero as an archetype see John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett, *The Myth of the American Superhero* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

[2] The interaction between comic books and the Bible is not new. In an 'alternative history' set in a misogynistic Victorian England, Wonder Woman herself is forced to act in a theatrical production of 'Susannah Battles the Elders', 'Eve Conquers the Snake' and 'Lady Samson and the Temple' (Loebs Messner, William, Phil Winsdale and Patricia Mulvihill, *Amazonia: A Tale of the Wonder Woman*, 1997). It has become increasingly common to re-imagine the Bible in comic book form such as in M. Maddox and J. Anderson's *The Lion Graphic Bible: The Whole Story from Genesis to Revelation* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 1998). Biblical scholars are beginning to analyse this interaction, although rarely as a means of developing new understandings of biblical characters. The online *SBL Forum* from the Society of Biblical Literature includes examples (www.sbl-site.org).

[3] B.J. Oropeza, 'Introduction: Superhero Myth and the Restoration of Paradise', in *The Gospel according to Superheroes: Religion and Popular Culture* (ed. B.J. Oropeza; New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 1-24 (5).

third and final figure to be 'read' is, unlike the first two, indisputably 'real' and located firmly within twenty-first-century vocabularies of violence. Lynndie England was arguably the most famous protagonist to come out of the 2004 Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal, involving the torture of Iraqi prisoners by US soldiers. By adding her story at the end of my analysis of the mythical Judith and Wonder Woman, I hope to remove the possible 'comfort-zone' associated with discussing the fictional as against the 'real'.

Focusing on the violence of these woman figures, the present study will present 'them' in a new and ambiguous light. This serves multiple purposes: it gives an opportunity to discuss a character from a sacred text within a cultural and political framework; opens the door that questions the reception of violence in society's icons; and seriously questions our presuppositions about the nature of a superhero, and indeed a supervillain. Finally, the characters are all woman figures, enabling the discussion of superhero characteristics from a specifically female perspective. Although there are hardly any universal differences between male and female superheroes, the similarities that superwomen share with each other are more numerous than the similarities shared with supermen. It is perhaps inevitable that these similarities are gendered and sexualised within their violent actions.

Judith's Story

Judith is a female character in an Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical book named after her. The earliest known version is in Greek. It is by an unknown author and may have been composed around 135–78 BCE.[4] Although scholars debate the matter, there is a broad consensus that the book is a work of fiction because of the numerous and apparently deliberate historical inaccuracies, such as Nebuchadnezzar being king of the Assyrians, not the Babylonians, in this book (Jdt. 1.1). In the narrative, Judith is a wealthy and pious widow (8.2-7) from the besieged town Bethulia. She reprimands the town elders and persuades them to accept her (undisclosed) actions before they surrender the town (8.9-36).

[4] Carey A. Moore, *Judith* (AB, 40; New York: Doubleday, 1985), 67-71. Moore's commentary on Judith is the most comprehensive available to date. Also see Benedikt Otzen, *Tobit and Judith* (Sheffield: Continuum, 2002); Toni Craven, *Artistry and Faith in the Book of Judith* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983); Morton S. Enslin, *The Book of Judith: Greek Text with an English Translation, Commentary, and Critical Notes* (ed. Solomon Zeitlin; Jewish Apocryphal Literature, 7; Leiden: Brill, 1972). For a *Judith* bibliography see Toni Craven, 'The Book of Judith in the Context of Twentieth-Century Studies of the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books', *Currents in Biblical Research* 1.2 (2003), 187-229.

Already, it is possible to see superheroic traits. She has absent parents, is God-like with noble origins, is suffering a tragedy and challenges the lawmakers to uphold justice. Before leaving the town to enter the enemy camp and meet Holofernes, the general of the besieging army, she prays to God (9.2-14), removes her widow's garments and makes herself 'very beautiful'. Thus we have our superhero's costume change. During her fourth night at the enemy camp Judith joins Holofernes for dinner, at the end of which she is alone in his tent 'with Holofernes stretched out on his bed, for he was dead drunk' (13.2).

> She went up to the bedpost near Holofernes' head, and took down his sword that hung there. She came close to his bed, took hold of the hair of his head, and said, 'Give me strength today, O Lord God of Israel!. Then she struck his neck twice with all her might, and cut off his head (13.6-8, NRSV).

This action leads to the defeat of the enemy and the salvation of Bethulia, and to Judith being praised by her town, the elders of Jerusalem and the High Priest (15.8-10). Throughout her life she remained a chaste widow; despite the desire of many, 'she gave herself to no man' (16.22). During her lifetime and 'for a long time after her death' (aged 105) no one 'spread terror among the Israelites' (16.25). And so we can see Judith as a saviour, a God-like figure — a superhero.

Wonder Woman's Story

In contrast to Judith, we know considerably more about the history of Wonder Woman, although her narrative is infinitely more complex. She was originally created by the psychologist, and inventor of the lie detector, William Moulton Marston, and first appeared as a supplementary story at the back of the eighth issue of *All-Star Comics* in 1941. The fictional character is predominantly, but not exclusively, presented in three volumes totaling 569 issues:[5] 1942–86, 1987–April 2006 and June 2006–current. These span nearly seventy years of development, not counting the retroactive continuity, crossovers, alternate universes and re-imaginings in different media. My concern lies with the comic book version. This in itself not only requires a severely edited summary of her life to date but also a disclaimer: I can only present some of the major events in her timeline. Therefore I am largely ignoring re-imaginings and storylines completely outside of the three-volume narrative, in addition to stories where the title 'Wonder Woman' has been given to characters other than the original Princess Diana.[6]

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[5] As of November 2007.

[6] Particularly Artemis (i.e. Vol. 2, Issue 97, 1996) and Donna Troy (i.e. Vol. 3, Issue 1, 2005).

Wonder Woman and Diana Prince are pseudonyms of Princess Diana, an Amazonian woman from Paradise Island (renamed Themyscira in Vol. 2, Issue 1,[7] 1987). She was created from clay by her mother Queen Hippolyte and given life by Aphrodite (Vol. 1, Issue 1, 1942). Many of the early comics described her as 'beautiful as Aphrodite, wise as Athena, swifter than Mercury, and stronger than Hercules' (first cited in *All Star Comics* 8, 1941). Wonder Woman has superheroic powers: strength and flight being two of many, as well as god-like noble origins. One day, the US Army intelligence officer Steve Trevor (with whom there are various romantic sub-plots, particularly in Vol. 1) crash-lands on Paradise Island and is near death. Princess Diana restores him to health and Aphrodite announces that an Amazon must accompany him to fight the terror of the Nazis. By means of a tournament, Princess Diana wins the right to leave her homeland and her mother (note the absent parent motif: the mother becomes absent but the father never even existed) and travels to 'Man's World', specifically 'America, the last citadel of democracy and of equal rights for women' (*All-Star Comics* 8). She is awarded gifts by the Olympian gods, including the Lasso of Truth: an indestructible lasso that can bind the strongest of people and gods, including Superman and Ares. Anyone bound by it is compelled to tell the truth. Her indestructible bracelets, which deflect projectile weapons, are Wonder Woman's other best-known gift from the gods. Having moved to 'Man's World', Diana Prince works as a nurse Lieutenant for the US Army and as an assistant to Steve Trevor, while Wonder Woman joins the Justice Society of America (JSA) as its first female superhero (*All Star Comics* 12, 1942). She works as the secretary before the JSA is disbanded (in retroactive continuity). Wonder Woman co-founds, together with Batman, Superman and others, a similar and longer-lasting group, the Justice League of America (JLA), an organisation of superheroes established to defend the earth (*The Brave and the Bold* 28, 1960). Following various heroic acts the JLA and numerous other heroes join forces with Wonder Woman to stop the destruction of the world as caused by the sorceress Circe (*War of the Gods* 1–4, 1991). During this cosmic battle Circe kills Wonder Woman by devolving her into the clay from which she was created (Issue 3, November 1991), only for her to be re-created out of the clay by her mother the following issue (December 1991). Eventually, she becomes the first DC Comics comic hero to take the life of a human, Maxwell Lord, whom she kills in order to prevent the destruction of the world and free Superman from his mind-control (Vol. 2, Issue 219, 2005). For this crime she is

[7] A note on comic referencing: I am using one possible classification. The issue number is stated on the front page of the comic book, but the volume is date dependent. This prevents confusion between numerically identical issues.

indicted before a grand jury but is later exonerated (*Manhunter* 26–30, 2007). Wonder Woman therefore supersedes the law, has the ability to save and is a superhero.[8]

Superheroic Violence

Our two entirely different superheroes are set in very different time-periods, yet they share striking similarities. They both leave their homes to defend humanity: Judith sacrifices herself by putting her purity and life in danger in leaving Bethulia and entering the enemy camp (Jdt. 10.10-11), while Princess Diana leaves Paradise Island for 'Man's World'. Both characters commit murder. Both characters even have a 'sidekick': Etta Candy is Wonder Woman's primary sidekick, particularly in the early years. In stark contrast to Wonder Woman Etta is short, rather plump, childlike and bumbling. Of course, Judith's equivalent is the maid/servant/slave (i.e. 8.7; 16.23) — she is left to her own devices in the Bethulian camp and has no obvious control over her destiny. There certainly are differences between the two superheroes. It would be hard to justifiably claim that Judith was ever a secretary or that Wonder Woman has permanently, irrevocably died. It is important to accept that there are such differences but, for the most part, it is the similarities that are of significance here, specifically those relating to violence.

Before looking at the violence itself, it is relevant and necessary to ask why violence is committed. The initial and obvious answer is, because each character had the proverbial 'baddie' or 'villain' to defeat: specifically with Judith, and most frequently for Wonder Woman, tyrannical dictators. Ares, the god of War (later renamed Mars) is perhaps her deadliest foe, for he is after all immortal. He recurs in all three volumes of Wonder Woman and affects the DC universe as a whole. In the Volume 2 version of her creation,[9] Wonder Woman has to fight Ares who has declared that the Amazons will not succeed in their goal of spreading peace and strengthening the Olympian gods through worship. Ares tries to start WW3 by manipulating the United States and Russian army into full readiness for simultaneous nuclear attacks, thus destroying humanity.

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[8] On the mythology see Elizabeth J. Danna, 'Wonder Woman Mythology: Heroes from the Ancient World and Their Progeny', in Oropeza, ed., *The Gospel according to Superheroes*, 67-82.

[9] Due to the complexities of retroactive continuity, there are multiple creation stories for most comic book characters. Ares does appear in Volume 1 — and is just as much of a villain as he is in Volume 2. He tries to ensure that the Allied Forces in WW2 are defeated, sets up a home on Mars (subduing the Martians in the process) and attempts to overthrow the gods of his original home, Olympus.

By binding Ares in her Lasso of Truth, Wonder Woman persuades Ares that if he causes WW3 humanity will be destroyed and there will be no one left to worship him, and no god can exist without worship (Vol. 2, Issues 1–7, 1987). Judith's enemy, Holofernes, may not literally be a god or from another realm, but he is a military man — a warmonger much like Ares. He is an alien of the national kind, attributes godly status to his commander Nebuchadnezzar and undoubtedly threatens the integrity of the heroine's home.

We could also argue that Holofernes is almost a traditional comic book villain, particularly if the reader is aware of textual geographical and historical inaccuracies. Even without such knowledge it is easy to demonstrate the irony. Judith, for example, says to Holofernes, 'I will say nothing false to my lord this night' (Jdt. 11.5).[10] Of course she does not: her Jewish God is her lord, not this self-important supervillain. With *Judith* and the protagonist's speech littered with such ironic statements, Holofernes comes across as a bit of a dimwit. He is destroyed by his own weaknesses. Perhaps he believes he has 'trapped' Judith by persuading her to be alone with him, but his own desire for sex, fuelled by his weakness for wine, ensures that he himself is trapped. His own self-entrapment serves to exacerbate the irony within the narrative — just like his comic book counterpart. Ares is trapped by his own plan and weakness — the success of his plan would lead to his own destruction, suggesting that his own ability for chaos is simultaneously limited by stupidity and his unceasing desire for chaos.

A further similarity between the villains is the devastation they actually, and potentially, cause their victims. As a resident of Bethulia, Judith is a victim. If Holofernes is successful she would probably be raped and enslaved, and her faith would be suppressed. Anyone that doubts this should read Judith 2, where Holofernes's campaign of terror becomes clear: he is a violent aggressor who 'ravaged' and 'plundered' (2.23) and 'killed everyone who resisted him' (2.25). Likewise, anybody that thinks a comic character cannot be raped and murdered has not read *Identity Crisis* (2004), where Sue Dibny is raped in retroactive continuity and later tortured to death over the space of many issues.[11] Apart from my own assessment of why the superheroes have to fight the supervillains, they both explain why they fight. Wonder Woman frequently does so in the form of narration, to explain why she is doing things. On one occasion, she is holding up a wall and narrates, 'I am caught in a defining moment of my life…holding back the chaos…as mankind falls inexorably toward death' (Vol. 2, Issue 151, 1999).

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[10] On the subject of irony in *Judith*, see Moore, *Judith*, 78-85.

[11] This is one of the most notorious events in American comic book history, dividing fans and alienating much of the female readership because of the sheer violent, unnecessary brutality of the story. That the rape itself is a piece of retroactive continuity means that the after affects of the rape on Sue were never seen — only the rape itself (in flashback).

Judith explicitly states her reasons for generating violence in a hymn of praise 'before all Israel', speaking of the actions of the enemy against *her* people:

> He [The Assyrian] boasted that he would burn up my territory,
> and kill my young men with the sword,
> and dash my infants to the ground,
> and seize my children as booty,
> and take my virgins as spoil (Jdt. 16.4, NRSV).

Judith also says to the town elders that if Bethulia is captured 'all Judea will be captured and our sanctuary will be plundered; and he ["the Lord our God", 8.16] will make us pay for its desecration with our blood' (8.21). Judith is defending her people, faith and God. The latter two aspects, it could be argued, are the primary motives for her violent actions, as Judith is repeatedly presented as a very pious Jew. That her faith is challenged, and would be more so under the control of Holofernes, is undoubtedly a major factor in her actions. What of Wonder Woman though?

Princess Diana in all her guises is regularly witnessed praying to her gods, the gods of Olympus: 'Oh, Gods of Olympus! Though I love *paradise*, I yearn for *more* from my life...I yearn for a *purpose!*' (original emphasis; Vol. 2, Issue 1, 1987). The religion is not recognisable as anything 'actual', as it is a fictionalised version of the Greco-Roman pantheon,[12] but the gods are significant and recurring. These gods, like Wonder Woman herself, change shape and character over the course of the ages but they ultimately interfere with, control and help Princess Diana and her associates as well as the world. Indeed, a recurring theme is the changing nature of their role in humanity's lives as other gods replace them. What has this to do with the violence in Wonder Woman you might ask? Aside from Ares causing wars, there are instances where gods are at war: the most obvious war of these is in the four-issue *War of the Gods* (1991). The primary (and ultimately defeated) antagonist, a sorceress named Circe, declares: 'I am brewing a Holy War'. Considerable violence stems from Wonder Woman in this issue. Not only does she destroy Circe, but also the God Hectate whom Circe worships. And how does she do it? By binding Hectate's spirit with her lasso (Issue 4). Interestingly, this violence is also done to herself — she sacrifices herself, believing her death will save the world from Circe because of the curse which connects them in life and death (she is wrong).[13] This is one difference

[12] All traces of the Roman pantheon were later removed.

[13] There are many moments in the narrative where Wonder Woman could be understood as a female Christ. At one point she is near death when Poseidon takes her into the ocean and gives her new life (just like John the Baptist). When she is 'reborn' (the actual word used) she appears a long way above the water, so that the sky is her background and she is completely bathed in a yellow and red light. She is, of course, in the crucifixion pose (Vol. 2, Issue 7, 1987).

between Judith and Wonder Woman: Judith potentially and figuratively intends to sacrifice herself, but this never actually happens. Nevertheless, if self-sacrifice is a superheroic trait, both characters are superheroes. At least so far.

Wonder Woman kills and violently subdues gods and monsters in her story, but what of humans? The main violent act of each character is the murder of a man. Judith decapitates Holofernes with his own sword (Jdt. 13.8); Wonder Woman snaps the neck of Maxwell Lord. These murders may have been justifiable, if there is such a thing as 'justifiable homicide'; however, either way, both women choose to kill their opposition. There are other similarities relating to the dispatch of the supervillain. Wonder Woman breaks the neck of Maxwell Lord. She snaps it, quite literally with her bare hands. Only one step removed from this, Judith decapitates her enemy with his own sword, with all her might: she wields it against his neck twice. The ensuing deaths are very immediate, very violent and very gruesome. Both deaths are extremely graphic. In Wonder Woman's tale the visual is key. The image is accompanied by no words but a single sound: 'KRK' (Vol. 2, Issue 219, 2005). Re-reading the *Judith* narrative in this light, we can almost hear the self-same sound and we *can* 'hear' the fall of the sword and the slicing through the spine. This is helped by an alternative translation of the verse (13.8), offered by Carey Moore: 'Then she struck at his neck twice with all her might, and chopped off his head'.[14] The onomatopoeic nature of Moore's choice of 'chopped' highlights the physicality and sound of the action. So too do artistic representations of the decapitation, the most depicted scene from Judith's life. Many of the representations are just as graphic as the depiction of Wonder Woman, with blood spurting from the neck instead of the grizzly sound.[15]

You might think that Wonder Woman does not have her violent act re-drawn — after all it was only imagined in 2005 — but you would be wrong. The next issue of Wonder Woman (Vol. 2, Issue 220, 2005) re-imagines it. This time she is narrating it as a past event, with her own justification for it: 'I made my decision. I stand by it as the proper one.' In this image the murder is seen from the side, as opposed to the original where Maxwell's death is shown from

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[14] Moore, *Judith*, 222.

[15] Cf. Artemisia Gentileschi's 'Judith Beheading Holofernes', Theophile Bigot's 'Judith and Holofernes', Caravaggio's 'Judith Beheading Holofernes'. For discussion on depictions of Judith in art and culture see Mieke Bal, 'Head-Hunting: "Judith" on the Cutting Edge of Knowledge', *JSOT* 63 (1994), 3-34. Repr. in A. Brenner, ed., *A Feminist Companion to Esther, Judith and Susanna* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 253-86; Margarita Stocker, *Judith — Sexual Warrior: Women and Power in Western Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); and Nira Stone, 'Judith and Holofernes: Some Observations on the Development of the Scene in Art', in *'No One Spoke Ill of Her': Essays on Judith* (ed. James C. VanderKam; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 73-93.

the front. In the original, Wonder Woman kills Maxwell from behind but not so here: she stands in front of him. Another difference is that in the second image Superman takes a more active role, running towards Wonder Woman and trying to stop her, whereas he looks a bit vacant, almost stupid in the original. This, of course, connects to the repercussions Wonder Woman faces (more on that later). There is even a third retelling in *Infinite Crisis* 1 (2005). In this re-imagining Superman is telling how the murder was broadcast on television; the single image duplicates the actual murder in the original but at a wider angle. The only major motif present in all three depictions is the binding of Maxwell Lord.

As we have already seen, Wonder Woman does not just commit the one act of violence. She regularly beats, batters and murders. This violence has become increasingly graphic, so much so that even Princess Diana herself states, 'In a world filled with violence I seem to be reverting to it more and more' (Vol. 1, Issue 244, 1978). This statement can almost be read as a metafictive commentary on her decline into violent villainy. What about Judith though? She is a war leader, correctly predicting that the enemy army will flee upon discovering the death of Holofernes. Rather than merely letting the enemy soldiers live, run and tell the world of the strength of Bethulia, she gives the order for all able-bodied men to chase the soldiers down: 'they will flee before you. Then you...will pursue them and cut them down in their tracks' (14.3-4). This is hardly the action of a forgiving hero. Instead, it reflects the nature of a vengeful villain.

The reactions to the violent actions differ greatly within the narratives. Batman and Superman ostracise Wonder Woman after the killing of the human Maxwell Lord (but not for numerous murders of non-humans). She is being judged by her male counterparts, whereas Judith is praised. What might this say about the two narratives? Certainly, in both stories the superwomen are praised for killing the 'other': in Judith's case, the foreigner; but in Wonder Woman's case, the gods and the monsters but *not* the human. In this case the human, at least with regard to murder, is not regarded as 'other'. Does this say anything about the stories' respective location in time and place? Does it suggest a particular change in morality, or that there is a case for justifiable homicide during war and as self-defense but not as punishment? Are Batman's and Superman's extremely negative reactions to her a commentary on capital punishment? Perhaps the gender of the killers was relevant. For Judith the very fact that she is a woman is key to her narrative, with the recurring theme 'by the hand of a woman' (i.e. 13.15). God is so powerful he can defeat his enemies even through a mere woman.[16] Conversely, Wonder Woman exists in a more equal world where it has to be shown that no one, irrespective of their gender, should get away with murder, particularly as the heroic murder of humans had thus far been a taboo

[16] Although God is far less present in *Judith* than any of Wonder Woman's Olympian gods.

for DC comics. Finally, did Wonder Woman's colleagues react negatively, perhaps as a get-out clause for the male (and better selling) superheroes, while the Bethulian men remain blameless in their narrative?

Sexualised and Gendered Violence

The violence in both narratives is sexualised and gendered. The female superprotagonists are sexualised in their attire and actions, and stereotypically gendered in their reliance on men. Like their male counterparts, female superheroes rarely fight crime as anything other than their 'superhero alter-ego' — even though they are fully capable of doing so when in their civilian clothes. Unlike male superheroes, their civilian identity is also an alternative, uniformed image. For Judith, this is as a widow in widow's garb — clothing wholly defined by her relationship to a (dead) man. For Princess Diana, this is as Diana Prince (note the masculinising reduction of her title) acting the *assistant* to the *man* she regularly saves when wearing her Wonder Woman costume. Her costume is a sexualised item in and of itself, becoming increasingly more revealing throughout the ages. The skirt gradually became hot pants and then high-cut knickers, all the while her breasts became unfeasibly large for anyone to be able to run with, much less fight (Fig. 1).[17]

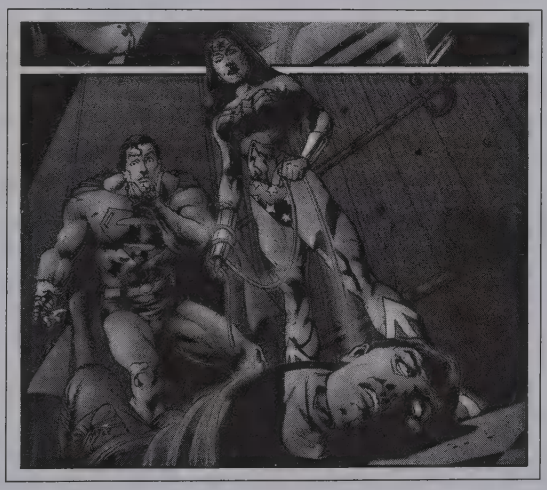

Figure 1. From: 'Wonder Woman' #219.
© 2005 DC Comics. All Rights Reserved.

[17] See also Les Daniels and Chip Kidd, *Wonder Woman: The Life and Times of the Amazon Princess* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2000); and Lillian S. Robinson, *Wonder Women: Feminisms and Superheroes* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

When Judith is introduced she is wearing her everyday attire: she has 'put a sackcloth around her waist and dressed in widow's clothing' (Jdt. 8.4-6). In preparation for entering the enemy camp, Judith is presented differently: she 'made herself very beautiful' (10.4). Both characters are depicted, within their narratives and re-imaginings, wearing what is considered the sexy dress of the day. They also use sex in their enemy-defeating escapades. Wonder Woman even uses bondage as punishment, and in turn, is frequently in chains herself.[18] This is because of the dubious understanding of bondage in William Moulton Marston's personal philosophy: 'A bound or chained person does not suffer even embarrassment in the comics, and the reader, therefore, is not being taught to enjoy suffering'.[19] What a delicious irony: all the killings listed here (and many more besides) include binding by the so-called Lasso of Truth, which by its very nature controls, captures and subdues. Invariably, these images are incredibly sexualised, turning the binding into sadomasochism. The original version of the killing of Maxwell Lord demonstrates this. As can be seen in Figure 1, the dead Maxwell is still bound as Wonder Woman stands over him. We, as the viewers, are on the floor with Maxwell as we follow the lasso up her artificially extended leg, across her thigh to her genital region. From here the viewer's gaze ends in her hand with the lasso hanging, like a flaccid penis, simultaneously emasculating and feminising her after her typically 'male' action.

Judith is similarly depicted. She uses her sexuality to deceive Holofernes into being alone with her. Perhaps the most obvious example is when she reclines on lambskins in Holofernes' tent (12.15-16). This deception enables her to commit what has been frequently interpreted as a sexual act — killing him on his bed. By violently attacking the head, both characters can be seen as acting in a traditionally masculine manner while also committing an act of castration, if Freud's theory is to be believed.[20] If this is the case, the women are moving beyond saving their people, and even beyond punishment, into the world of revenge — a trait more readily associated with supervillains than superheroes.

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[18] An interesting point about this bondage was raised by Greg Garrett ('Comics and the Bible: Reinterpretation and Mythic Understanding', *SBL Forum*, 21 Dec. 2006–28 Jan. 2007. Available online: http://www.sbl-site.org/Article.aspx? ArticleId=613), who suggests that this is a simplistic and conservative application of the Aqedah ('binding of Isaac', Gen. 22).

[19] Daniels and Kidd, *Wonder Woman*, 20. For more on Marston see William Moulton Marston, 'Don't Laugh at the Comics', in *The Family Circle* magazine (cited in Daniels and Kidd, *Wonder Woman*, 20).

[20] Sigmund Freud, 'Medusa's Head', in Freud, *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love* (ed. Philip Rieff; New York: Collier, 1963), 212-13. For discussions of *Judith* in relation to Freud's castration theory, see Bal, 'Head-Hunting', 7 and Stocker, *Judith* (various).

Beyond this, female superheroes have a problem. They are not permitted, for whatever reason, to be fully independent heroes in the way that supermen are. They end up being helped and invariably rescued by a male superhero. Often these superheroes have the role of conferring legitimacy on the female either through narrative techniques,[21] such as telling the story, or through explicit actions. Even the name 'Wonder Woman' is given by a man, Steve Trevor. She heals him and identifies herself as 'just a woman', to which Steve says 'My Wonder Woman'. Thus, as Robinson notes, it is her capacity to heal, not to fight, which names her.[22] Many of the major moments of Wonder Woman's career (her joining the JSA, death and resurrection) occur outside of her solo comics and within stories of multiple characters. This is common in comic book narratives, as the industry maximises revenue by spreading a key story across many individual characters' issues in order to self-publicise and increase sales. However, with Wonder Woman there seems to be an excessive amount of this, exacerbated by the seemingly constant inclusion of Superman in Wonder Woman's comics. This occurs to such an extent that the last issue of the second Volume of Wonder Woman, issue 226, is a crossover tale with Superman!

Judith does not escape this indignity either. Legitimacy is conferred upon her by the elders, granting her permission to enact her plan and leave Bethulia. Then there is Achior, an advisor to Holofernes. He is sent to Bethulia to suffer its population's fate, ultimately converting to Judaism. Within the structure of the narrative Achior effectively swaps places with Judith in location and role: Achior moves from the enemy camp to Bethulia and becomes a peaceful friend to the Jews, whilst Judith becomes a 'warrior' in the enemy camp. Whereas Achior's role-change is permanent, Judith is gradually re-domesticated and resumes her original role as a 'pious widow'.[23] Wonder Woman experiences a similar fate. In Vol. 3 Princess Diana rejects her role as Wonder Woman while defending her murder of Maxwell Lord in court. Instead, she becomes a secret agent with Donna Troy, taking on the Wonder Woman role. This suggests that female superheroes never quite have the same heroic certainty as male superheroes.[24]

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[21] Robinson, *Wonder Women*, 85.

[22] Robinson, *Wonder Women*, 28.

[23] Amy-Jill Levine, 'Sacrifice and Salvation: Otherness and Domestication in the Book of Judith', in VanderKam, ed., *'No One Spoke Ill of Her'*, 17-30 (28). Repr. in A. Brenner (ed.), *A Feminist Companion to Esther*, 208-23; Adolfo D. Roitman, 'Achior in the Book of Judith: His Role and Significance', in VanderKam, ed., *'No One Spoke Ill of Her'*, 31-45.

[24] The most recent writer of *Wonder Woman*, Gail Simone, is the creator of the now infamous phrase 'Women in Refrigerators' (WiR), referring to the seemingly inevitable killing, maiming and disempowerment of female comic book superheroes. It developed from her website of the same name, detailing these events (http://www.unheardtaunts.com/wir/index.html).

At the very least, their identity as superheroes is limited and ambiguous. At worst, their extreme violence opens the door to them being labeled 'supervillains'. This label can be applied by reference to a 'real' and to a political supervillain.

Lynndie England: The Villainy of Superhero Violence

The violent connections between our 'fictional' superheroes are clear, but what about the 'real' Lynndie England mentioned earlier? Born in 1982, she lived in a trailer park in Fort Ashby, West Virginia, where she worked as a supermarket cashier. Aged 17, she joined the US Army as a reservist, in order to pay for college.[25] Before being called up, she worked in a chicken processing plant, where she met and married a colleague. While in Iraq she met and fell in love with a man 15 years her senior, Charles Graner, with whom she has a son. According to an interview with Lynndie in *Marie Claire*, she was smitten by him and did everything he said.[26] He took his camera everywhere, taking photographs of her, including in sexually demeaning positions. This pattern of willing submission carried through to their work when they were transferred to Abu Ghraib, an Iraqi prison. She was only 20 and was assigned as a clerk, but ended up guarding prisoners. Graner claimed that he told Lynndie to pose for photographs with humiliated Iraqi prisoners.[27] An example can be seen in Figure 2.

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[25] For Lynndie England's profile and verdict, see http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/4490795.stm, 27 September 2005 (accessed October 2014).

[26] Tara McKelvey, 'A Soldier's Tale: Lynndie England', *Marie Claire* (n.d.). Available online: http://www.marieclaire.com/world/news/lynndie-england-1.

[27] Spc. L.B Edgar, 'Court Sentences England to 3 Years', *Army News Service*. Available online: http://www4.army.mil/ocpa/read.php?story_id_key=7988, 9 September 2005. In April 2004 reports of rape, murder, torture and abuse of Iraqi prisoners at the hands of US soldiers at Abu Ghraib prison were made graphically public. These were in the form of photographs, showing soldiers posing with prisoners forced into degrading and humiliating positions. Photographs also depicted soldiers in the process of beating prisoners and taunting them with dogs. Prior to public awareness of these actions, the Taguba Report was commissioned to investigate allegations of abuse (January 2004). The report, which was leaked to the public in May 2004, concluded that between August 2003 and February 2004 several US soldiers breached international law, and senior leaders failed to prevent detainee abuse. See Article 15-6, 'Investigation of the 800th Military Police Brigade', *Federation of American Scientists* (2004). Available online: http://www.fas.org/irp/agency/dod/taguba.pdf.

Figure 2. Lynndie England, Abu Ghraib Torture (copyright free).

Lynndie England was convicted by a military jury on one count of conspiracy, four counts of maltreating detainees and one count of committing an indecent act. Judge Pohl asked the sentencing panel to consider her 'age, family and financial difficulties, mental condition, military awards and victims'.[28] She was sentenced to three years in jail and a dishonourable discharge. Her actions can define her as a supervillain as she was an alien in another land and, many would argue, an oppressor, violating the land and the peoples where she was based.

The photograph in Figure 2 looks immediately similar to the image of Wonder Woman (Fig. 1). In both, the 'victim' is bound and the lead/ lasso is held by the protagonist. The connection between the images provides a stark 'wake-up call' that impacts on Wonder Woman: when she binds her enemies, it is as a form of torture for the retrieval of information. It causes suffering, degradation and humiliation, as well as forcing changes in the behaviour (as in the case of Ares) of the bound.

What has this to do with Judith? Look at the third and final image (Fig. 3). In it we can see a graphic depiction of a modernised Judith — binding, humiliating and torturing Holofernes in a brutal fashion similar to the two others. The horror of the act is cruelly depicted: urine runs down the victim's legs. The image clearly reflects scenes from Abu Ghraib — Judith even has a cigarette dangling from her mouth, as Lynddie does in many of her photos. The theme of the phallus, seen in Wonder Woman's lasso, is also carried through in the other

[28] Edgar, 'Court Sentences England to 3 years'.

images. Judith's phallus is planted, firmly erect, between her legs. The explicitly phallic nature of the bondage is interesting as a reflection of the known sexual activities of the women. Despite the fact that both Judith and Wonder Woman are presumed non-virgins, and both have an ambiguous relationship with sex, both remain essentially aloof of physical sexual activity.[29] Conversely, Lynndie, as a mother and in her relationship with Graner, was openly sexually active, but her phallus is distanced from her, pointing away from her. Further, hers is the least gendered of the images. Her female shape is the least emphasised, her breasts are neither bare nor heaving. Lynndie's image is the least stereotypically 'titillating', although she is nonetheless a sexual being wielding a phallus. All three images are simultaneously confrontational in their subconscious sexuality, but tepidly sexy in their stereotyped sexuality of women, breasts and bondage. Perhaps this is to make the images consumable for all audiences.

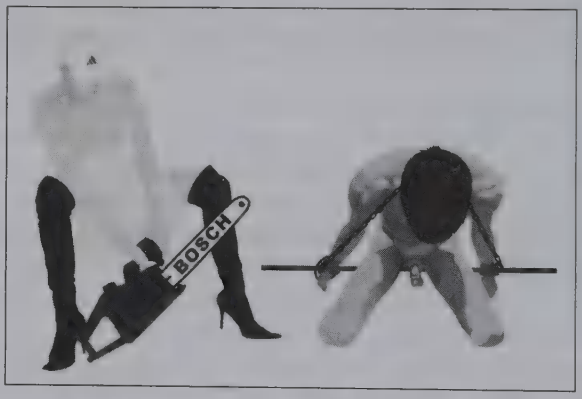

Figure 3. Heidi Popovic, 2007, Judith with the Chainsaw (unpublished sketch, copyright Christian Pölzler).

In the images, the women's actions are brutally framed for public consumption. Lynndie's action was probably intended for a small number of sympathetic eyes, but ended up being seen by the whole world for what it was — a violent oppression. Wonder Woman's murder was created for us, the reading/viewing public. However, even within her own narrative it is broadcast to the world as a violent act, helping not only her friends to disown her but leading to the public who loved her to fear her. Likewise, Judith's act has been shown for what it truly

[29] For discussions of Wonder Woman's virginity, see Rebecca Salek, 'Oh, The Wonder of her Virginity: Wonder Woman, Sex, an Island Fulla Maybe-Lesbians, and What the Heck Is a Virgin, Anyway?', *Sequential Tart*. Available online: http://www.sequentialtart.com/archive/feb03/art_0203_4.shtml, February 2003.

is, a cold-blooded murder, in the countless images of her and within her own narrative. She publicised her action by displaying Holofernes' head on the parapet (Jdt. 14.1). Such acts are a form of communication, but what is it they are saying? This will inevitably depend upon the reader, but one may question the nature of the 'other' as victim, situated in time and place. Whereas Judith is fully supported in her attack on the foreigner, Wonder Woman is completely rejected for hers; and Lynndie is supported within her own environment, but utterly rejected outside it. What do these complex variations say to you about the possible hypocrisy in understanding our heroes? What does it say about humanity, that the only character wholly rejected for their most violent action is the cultural, the unquestionably fictional? Or, does this say more about the dehumanising nature of war? Further, to me, the public nature of the actions suggests that all three women have fallen into their own trap. Even if their intentions were good, their violent self-entrapment causes pain and humiliation, and they have been shown wanting by the very actions intended to help. This irony places them within my framework of a supervillain.

Now that the tables have turned on Judith and Wonder Woman, it is only fair to do the same for Lynndie; but how can we possibly understand Lynndie England as a superhero? By removing her from these infamous images we can look at the woman, the true (American) superhero. She left her home to save her home (and did so as a woman in a man's world). She had absent parents in her new territory, where she wore a costume — her army uniform seen in the self-same photos which declare her a supervillain. Lynndie upholds justice by policing in Iraq and by superseding the legal system for what can be perceived as 'the greater good'. She is, by Oropeza's definition as presented in the Introduction, and in comparison with Judith and Wonder Woman, a superhero.[30]

This is hard for me to accept, but this is the logical and necessary conclusion. Ultimately, the three women are all supervillains as well as superheroes. This leads one to question how superheroes, particularly of the 'real' kind, can become supervillains. What is it that makes this happen? We may also question the morality of violent superheroes, and the extent to which they are idolised icons in Western (particularly American) society. This idolisation is manifested in many ways, be that a child adoring Wonder Woman (as indeed I did) or, more alarmingly, something to be explicitly mimicked.

There is a disturbing phenomenon called 'doing a Lynndie', seemingly begun by the now defunct website Bad Gas.[31] It involves finding a preferably unknowing 'victim' and pointing at them, copying Lynndie. In the photograph they copy, Lynndie gives the 'thumbs-up' to a nude row of male prisoners, each with

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[30] Oropeza, 'Introduction', 1-24.

[31] 'Doing a Lynndie'. Available online: http://badgas.co.uk/lynndie/.

a bag over his head (again, the head is targeted) as a form of bondage. A simple Google search for 'doing a Lynndie' yields nearly 30,000 results (as of June 2010). What does this say about the interaction between people and 'characters'? Is there a difference between people's reactions to actual events or to comic books, or does the reaction to Lynndie simply mean that people really 'don't give a shit'? For my part, I am hoping that this is the case rather than that people become pleased and excited by the sight of one human torturing another.

This essay makes an uncomfortable point: it challenges the common understanding of typically idolised, sacred and cultural female heroes. Perhaps even more difficult to accept is the emotionally and intellectually disturbing request, implied in the analysis of Lynndie, to think about dehumanised political figures in an overtly positive way in order to make a fair and more polyvalent analysis. By doing so, we can begin to think fairly about many of the seemingly unanswerable questions I have asked here about society's superheroes and supervillains.

Appendix: Comics Editions

DC Comics (New York)

Andreyko, Mark, Javier Pina and Robin Riggs, *Manhunter 26–30* (February–May 2007).
Heinberg, Allan, Terry Dodson and Rachel Dodson, *Wonder Woman* 1 (June 2006).
Luke, Eric, Matthew Clark and Tom Simmons, *Wonder Woman* 151 (December 1999).
Messner Loebs, William, Phil Winsdale and Patricia Mulvihill, *Amazonia: A Tale of the Wonder Woman* (1997).
Messner Loebs, William and Mike Deodato, *Wonder Woman 97* (May 1995).
Perez, George, and Cynthia Martin, *War of the Gods* 1–4 (September–December 1991).
Potter, Greg, George Perez, Bruce Patterson and Len Wein, *Wonder Woman*, Vol. 2, Issues 1–7 (February–August 1987).
Rucka, Greg, Rags Morales and Mark Propst, *Wonder Woman 219: Sacrifice 4 of 4* (September 2005).
Rucka, Greg, David Lopez and BIT, *Wonder Woman 220 guest starring Batman* (October 2005).
Rucka, Greg, Cliff Richards and Ray Snyder, *Wonder Woman 226 and Superman* (April 2006).
Schwartz Julius, Mike Sekowsky and Murphy Anderson, *The Brave and the Bold* 28 (March 1960).

Non-DC Comics

Maddox, Mike, and Jeff Anderson, *The Lion Graphic Bible* (Oxford: Lion Publishing, 1998).
Marston, William Moulton (under the pen name Charles Moulton) and Harry Peter, *Wonder Woman* (insert in *All-Star Comics* 8; New York: All American Comics, December 1941).
Marston, William Moulton (under the pen name Charles Moulton) and Harry Peter, *Wonder Woman* (in *All-Star Comics* 12; New York: All American Comics, August 1942).
Marston, William Moulton (under the pen name Charles Moulton) and Harry Peter, *Wonder Woman*, Vol. 1, Issue 1 (New York: All American Comics, Summer 1942).

Chapter 14a

Second Thoughts on Female Terrorists and More: A Self-Response

Emma England

'Violent Superwomen' is essentially a thought experiment designed to get myself and the reader to think about how we encounter and engage with the intersections between violence, gender, images, and cultural discourse. With this in mind, what questions does the essay raise seven or so years after it was originally written?

Given that terror is synonymous with Islam in much contemporary cultural discourse, I wonder how the essay would look if I were to reframe it entirely around three Islamic women, focusing particularly on women who have a shared, or were perceived of as sharing, perceived and actual roles as leaders, saviours, perpetrators and victims of social and/or physical violence. One woman could be the superhero Ms Marvel, the pseudonym of Kamala Khan, a Pakistani-American Muslim who has to both handle supervillains and to manage her role within her family and her religion and their place in American society.[1] Women and girls as young as sixteen from the United Kingdom who travel to Iraq and Syria to join the Islamic State (IS) could replace Lynndie England. As of September 2014 there are known to be at least twenty women who have done this, largely as individuals and without family members having prior knowledge.[2] Feeling disenfranchised in their own country they join the IS, become wives of soldiers and encourage others to do so through social media. The third figure would be Bilqis, known elsewhere as the Queen of Sheba. Retellings and interpretations of the story explain her becoming queen by getting the Himyarite king drunk, beheading him and putting the head on

[1] Sana Amanat (creator) and Kelly Sue DeConnick (writer), *Ms Marvel* (in *Captain Marvel*; Marvel Comics, Vol. 7, Issue 13, August 2013).

[2] Homa Khaleeli, 'The British Women Married to Jihad', *The Guardian*, 6th September 2014). Online: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/06/british-women-married-to-jihad-isis-syria.

display.[3] Such a story can obviously segue into an analysis of Judith, and with a detailed analysis further connections might be possible between the contemporary narratives and the retelling of Bilqis's story.

Other than new questions such as these, the question I asked myself even before being asked to write this self-response was: Have I treated the sexuality in the images and the texts of my original essay to the extent they deserve? My answer would have to be: Probably not. I have long associated Wonder Woman with BDSM: Bondage, Dominance, Submission, Sadism and Masochism that functions within a consensual environment (Safe, Sane and Consensual, or Risk Aware Consensual Kink are the main terms used). Wonder Woman's creator William Moulton Marston's personal lifestyle choice (he lived in a triad with two women) and psychological work on dominance and submission heavily influenced his creation.[4] This can be seen through Wonder Woman's lasso of truth, and her actions as well of those of other female characters such as Etta Candy.

If the essay were reframed or rewritten with a focus upon BDSM, Heidi Popovic's *Judith with the Chainsaw* (Fig. 3) could be viewed as a moment of consensual play between adults (the chainsaw being part of the type of play known as 'Mindfuck', where the submissive enters a state of psychological confusion). Could this be used to interpret Holofernes as willingly submitting to the fairly obvious manipulation of an enemy? He was playing a game he did not understand the rules of — the rules Judith broke? Interpreting Lynndie England in this framework would necessitate a closer assessment of her actions as part of a sexual relationship with her partner, and likewise questioning her actions over her victims in Abu Ghraib. This would in turn result in challenging the concept and importance of consent not only in BDSM, but also in human relationships. The element of control involved in the lives of the women, how much control is exerted upon them and how much they exert upon others, is part of that relationship and how the men or women are victims of submission in different ways. The result of such a reframing of the original essay may be to reduce or even remove terrorism from the essay entirely, making it a different sort of work. That is not something I would want to see. Nonetheless, the question about BDSM in *Wonder Woman* and where that may lead does lead me to

[3] Barbara Freyer Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an: Traditions, and Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 64; Jacob Lassner, *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba: Boundaries of Gender and Culture in Postbiblical Judaism and Medieval Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 51.

[4] Lewis Call, *BDSM in American Science Fiction and Fantasy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 27-31.

believe that there is work to be done on the presentation of biblical women and biblical themes within BDSM frameworks, and what this might mean for biblical narratives.[5]

[5] Little has been done on this to date. For examples of what has been written see Lori Rowlett, 'Violent Femmes and S/M: Queering Samson and Delilah', in *Queer Commentary and the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Ken Stone; JSOTSup, 334; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 106-15. Roland Boer, 'Night Sprinkle(s): Pornography and the Song of Songs', in *Knockin' on Heaven's Door: The Bible and Popular Culture* (Biblical Limits; New York: Routledge, 1999), 53-70, and 'A Fleshly Reading: Masochism, Ecocriticism and the Song of Songs', in *The Earthy Nature of the Bible: Fleshly Readings of Sex, Masculinity, Carnality* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 27-34. Virginia Burrus and Stephen Moore, 'Performing Sadomasochism in the Song of Songs', *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 25 (2002), 129-46 and 'Unsafe Sex: Feminism, Pornography, and the Song of Songs', *Biblical Interpretation* 11 (2003), 24-52. Emma England, 'Retelling the Bible with BDSM' (paper presented at *Hidden Perspectives: Queering the Bible*: LaDIYfest and the University of Sheffield, funded by the Arts Council; Sheffield, UK, 1 June 2013).

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Athalya Brenner-Idan is Professor Emerita of Hebrew Bible at the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and is now Professor in Biblical Studies at the University of Tel Aviv, Israel.

Helen Efthimiadis-Keith teaches Hebrew Bible at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

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